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Chronicles

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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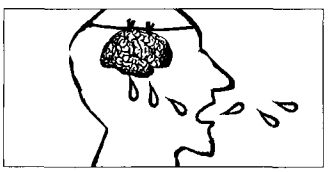

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EDITOR
Thomas Fleming

MANAGING EDITOR
Theodore Pappas

SENIOR EDITOR, BOOKS
Chilton Williamson, Jr.

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Michael Washburn

ART DIRECTOR
Anna Mycek-Wodecki

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Harold O.J. Brown, Katherine Dalton, Samuel Francis, George Garrett, Christine Haynes, E. Christian Kopff, J.O. Tate, Clyde Wilson

CORRESPONDING EDITORS
Bill Kauffman, William Mills, Jacob Neusner, John Shelton Reed, Momcilo Selic

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PUBLISHER
Allan C. Carlson

PUBLICATION DIRECTOR
Guy C. Reffett

PRODUCTION SECRETARY
Anita Candy

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Rochelle Frank

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A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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On Ralph Nader and the Green Party

Like many *Chronicles* readers, I too am concerned about the way our electoral process is rigged in favor of the two establishment parties. I supported Pat Buchanan for the GOP nomination this year, but I am disappointed that he did not take the approach of Jerry Brown in 1992: Brown refused to run on a third-party ticket but also refused to endorse Clinton-Gore.

Chronicles has often discussed alternatives to the Republicans and Democrats. You have mentioned the U.S. Taxpayers, Reform, and Libertarian parties, but what about the Green Party? I am planning to vote for Ralph Nader for President in November. He was on the ballot in a dozen states as of Labor Day and will eventually be on the ballot in 30-some states, with write-in campaigns taking place in the others (including Florida).

Nader is often portrayed as the champion of big government and regulation. But actually, I think he has always been more about exposing corporate and governmental corruption and wrongdoing than about rules and regulations. When wrongdoing is exposed, government usually passes some law to pacify critics and then the wrongdoers promptly co-opt the agency which is supposed to enforce the law. I think Nader understands this. Perhaps in the 1960's and 1970's he was more optimistic about the ability of the federal government to bring about positive change, but by the late 1980's he was emphasizing the need for fundamental political reform, for greater democratization. That's what appeals to me.

As a Jeffersonian, Nader supports decentralization of both economic and political power. In his introduction to *The Case Against Free Trade: GATT, NAFTA, and the Globalization of Corporate Power* (Earth Island Press, 1993), Nader writes: "It is rare that regulatory breakthroughs occur at the national, let alone international, level. Usually, a smaller jurisdiction—a town, city, or state—experiments with a standard, other cities and states copy it and, eventually, national governments and international governments, lagging behind, follow their lead. This percolating-up process will be squelched by GATT and NAFTA, with top-down mercantile dictates replacing bottom-up democratic impulses." In a *Washington Times* op-ed earlier this year ("U.S. Companies Should Pledge Allegiance," June 4), Nader argued that U.S.-based transnational corporations should be required to pledge allegiance to the American flag and the republic for which it stands. He believes the annual stockholder meetings would be the appropriate time and place for such a pledge. Nader is a true patriot. Nader was an advisor to the Jerry Brown campaign in '92, and he is the logical heir to Brown's political legacy.

Of the third-party candidates running this year, only Nader has the kind of transcendent populist appeal discussed by Kevin Phillips (*Arrogant Capital*) and Bill Kauffman (*America First!*). Nader can appeal to Brown Democrats, Buchanan Republicans, Browne Libertarians, Phillips Taxpayers, Perot Reformers, and, of course, Nader Greens. I am not saying he is the first choice of most of these blocs, but his emphasis on political reform, fair trade, genuine democracy, frugal government, noninterventionism, and decentralization cuts across the old ideological and party boundaries. If they are willing to move beyond a knee-jerk reaction to his name and listen to what Nader is saying and has been saying for the past decade, I think many populist conservatives would be attracted by his anti-NAFTA, anti-GATT, anti-Mexican/Wall Street bailout, anti-corporate greed, anti-congressional pay raise, anti-China MFN, anti-Gulf War, pro-term limits, pro-referendum, pro-campaign finance reform message. Nader and Buchanan clearly agree on many issues.

Of course, if people are looking for a candidate who espouses or implicitly accepts racial discrimination and other forms of inegalitarian thinking, Nader is the wrong man. Or if abortion is the only defining issue, then Nader is not the right person. I also understand why conservatives may be wary of a party perceived as a bunch of left-wing tree-huggers. While I do not speak for the entire state party, I am a founder (and current chair) of the Missouri Green Party. One reason I was attracted to the Greens is that they claim to be "neither left nor right." That's one of our slogans. When the Greens started in West Germany,

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they attracted not only disillusioned Social Democrats, but also disillusioned Christian Democrats. When I read *Green Politics* by Charlene Spretnak, I was excited by the idea of a populist party which could transcend the old and often empty ideological divisions (divisions which are used by the power elite to divide and conquer the common people).

With the advent of the Nader campaign, other Greens are realizing the potential of a grand populist coalition. When he appeared on *Donahue* before the New Hampshire primary, Nader himself praised Buchanan as the only presidential candidate willing to challenge the political power of big corporations. The July/August issue of *Mother Jones* has an article entitled "Nobody's Nader: The Tough Activist Has Some Kind Words for Buchanan, But None for Clinton." In turn, populist conservatives have begun to recognize that Nader is a friend rather than an enemy.

—Jeff Taylor
Columbia, MO

On Sex and the GOP

On a Sunday morning I sat down with a cup of black coffee and my July issue of *Chronicles* to enjoy my leisure time. Enjoy I did until I came to "Sex, Drugs, and a Republican Party" by Marc Morano. My reaction was first disgust, then anger, and finally a flashback to a day in history class 60 years ago.

The teacher was a petite lady. She walked slowly down the aisle among the students and in a very quiet yet serious voice she spoke these words: "When a society goes into a decline it will never stop midway. It will never stop until it hits the bottom and nothing you can do will stop it; so don't try!" That was when schools were still educating instead of indoctrinating students.

I ask myself every day how near we are to the bottom. Incidentally, was it Mr. Morano's intent to infer that such scandalous behavior as described in his article is peculiar to the Republican Party? If so, shame on him.

—Virginia Rinderer
Greenville, IL

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

SADDAM HUSSEIN has proved, once again, how easy it is to make fools of the American leadership. Five years ago President Bush, after bombing much of Iraq into the Stone Age, decided that discretion was the better part of valor and pulled our troops out before they had accomplished the only objective that would have justified our invasion. Former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, still nursing a grudge, wants to send in a hit squad to terminate this standing affront to our dignity, but that is not the sort of thing the State Department or the CIA can discuss in public.

What they also cannot discuss in public is their plot to overthrow Saddam Hussein. The plot—or at least this phase of it—was foiled by the entry of the Iraqi army into Erbil. All the busy little scorpions, beetles, and slugs—once their protective rock was lifted up—scuttled across the border into Turkey.

The Turks have their own quarrels with the Kurds, and while we responded to Saddam's attempt to recover control over one of his own cities by launching Cruise missiles, we gave the Turks a green light to cross the Iraqi border and kill Kurds. In case you missed the logic, let me repeat: if Saddam tries to put down a Kurdish rebellion in his own country, we rain death upon Iraq, but if the Turks actually invade Iraq to kill more or less the same Kurds, we applaud their contribution to world peace.

The Turks are key players in this game. If it were not for them, the United States might support the creation of an independent Kurdistan—a development the Turks would never permit. As a result, we have reiterated our commitment to maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq. Territorial integrity, apparently, does not exclude an air attack.

Partly because of the inherent absurdity of America's position, and partly because of the ineptitude of the ham-handed Warren Christopher and the Clinton State Department, our allies have refused to follow the Wonderland logic used to justify what would have been described in years past as unprovoked aggression. The fact that most Americans have expressed approval for these missile attacks is one more bit of proof that the American people are worse than stupid: Americans combine the moral toughness of the jellyfish with the sturdy individualism of the sheep. Our national bird should not be the eagle (or even the turkey, as Franklin advised) but the goose: noisy, self-important, subservient.

—Thomas Fleming

BASQUE nationalists are on the move. Despite the vigilance of the French and Spanish authorities, the Basques have carried out a fierce summer offensive, the latest stage in a clash between nationalism and federal police power. But there is no sign that Europe's leaders can cope with this latest nationalist upsurge.

Following a couple of precision strikes—the car-bombing of Army Major Luciano Cortizo Alonso in Léon and the murder of Socialist Party leader Fernando Mugica Herzog in Madrid (reported in *Current History*)—the summer war got into gear. According to the journal *Libération* on July 25, the militant Basque organization, the ETA, set off a total of 12 bombs at various sites in France and Spain, including the Reus Airport in Catalonia, where 35 tourists were injured.

Rocked by the series of bombings, which threatened the tourist trade, the French police launched the biggest manhunt since the dragnet that pulled in several ETA leaders in 1992. Near the town of Pau, the police nabbed Julian Atxurra Egurola, the third most powerful figure in the ETA. Only a few days later, police in Paris arrested Daniel Derguy, a French Basque who had done time in his country for his nationalist ties and whom Spanish authorities know as the man who directed several terrorist attacks against tourist spots and railway lines in rural areas in the summer of 1993.

The prisoners have been deported to Spain, where they await prosecution.

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In the meantime, their plight has become a human rights *cause célèbre*. In the course of an interview in Villejeuf, *Libération* reported on August 7, Derguy charged that the Spanish police had mistreated him, striking him repeatedly in the face and groin. Derguy's complaint echoes statements made by 83 other Basques in 1995, who said that the police had treated them in a fashion worthy of Castro's Cuba. In response to the charges, Basques in Brussels held a large demonstration on June 1, holding pictures of the jailed nationalists. The Comité des droits de l'homme au Pays basque issued a letter of protest urging the police to be more lenient.

But the official reaction to the upsurge in the *pays basque* was swift and severe. *Libération* announced on July 25 that Jaime Mayor Oreja, Spain's minister of the interior, had immediately called for augmented police power, outlining a plan for a joint crackdown on both sides of the border. Oreja also presented to the public a plan drawn up by chief of government Jose Maria Aznar, who had apparently borrowed a page from President Clinton's antiterrorism bill. Under Aznar's plan, the police will step up their surveillance of civilians, placing hidden cameras in towns with a large Basque population. This Orwellian scheme met with the approval of Juan Maria Atutxa, minister of the interior for the semiautonomous Basque government, who pointed to the state of emergency created by the ETA. Other officials concurred, although a judge in Madrid did warn that surreptitiously recording what innocent people do on public streets oversteps the acceptable limits of state power.

The Spanish officials believe that repression will work, but they do not seem to take note of rising anger and frustration in the *pays basque*. As James E. Jacob explains in his recent book *Hills of Conflict: Basque Nationalism in France*, much of the nationalist upsurge stems from anger over the French government's duplicity in its dealings with Basque representatives. Most Basques rejoiced at François Mitterrand's election in 1981, for he had promised them many things, including "the creation of a Basque department in France and clear commitments to cultural preservation." The French government's backpedaling on these promises made many Basques hostile to the very idea of negotiating with the authorities. In America and in Europe, the official attitude is much the same: eliminate the nationalist threat by all available means—stepping outside legal bounds, if need be—while ignoring the grievances that stoke the fires of nationalism. But repression, Jacob observes, "only hardens the resistance in the *abertzale* camp."

As Spain's political leaders respond to nationalist concerns with threats and denunciations, Europe's policy elite ignores and denies the existence of a Basque problem. In the summer issue of the *Harvard International Review*, Jacques Santer, president of the European Commission, hails European integration as a panacea for ancient rivalries and grievances. "European social and economic integration," he writes, "has culminated in the establishment of an area characterized by transnational peace and prosperity." Santer goes on to call for a vast expansion of the EU's domain.

Santer likes to pose as a man of the people. "If the ordinary people of Europe do not derive noticeable benefits from the union system," he writes, in a plea for an expanded EU budget, "that system is worthless." He doesn't know how right he is. As the architects of European union grapple with logistical questions—when to adopt a single currency, how to structure a transnational military—they ignore the larger problem that many of the ordinary people of Europe remain unwilling to trade in their customs and their identity for a place in the New European Order.

—*Michael Washburn*

THE FUKUYAMA-decade continues on—history has ended, all is well in the cosmos, and the New World Order is functioning well. We had, some 30 years ago, an advance confirmation of our smooth sailing in Senator Fulbright's book on *The Arrogance of Power*. The United States, he wrote, is not an empire and rejects all imperialistic temptation; yet, just in case it yields to the temptation, the planet may be assured: it will be a benevolent dictatorship.

In the era of Orwellian newspeak, we are not surprised that war is peace, love is hate, and that imperialism by good guys translates as solicitude and humanitarian concern. Sartre, for example, wrote that executing traitors to the Communist Party is an act of "mortal solicitude," a virtue.

But long before Fulbright and Francis Fukuyama, Immanuel Kant promised mankind (the last two centuries' favorite

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point of reference) that once the hated despotisms (he meant monarchies) vanish and "bourgeois republics" are proclaimed, the latter's attention will be solely absorbed by *trade*. Wars will be abolished as a "waste of resources." Kant enthused indecently when revolutionary terror engulfed France.

What we observe at present is that the Age of Trade resounds just as much of wars and imperialism as any age in the past. Liberal-democratic republics, based on industry and commerce, are as warlike and imperialistic as the autocratic regimes of history. How would Kant (and Spinoza, Montesquieu, Locke) explain that unless Franjo Tudjman agrees to territorial concessions, President Clinton may threaten to cut him off from international loans? Or that unless Italian fishermen use the appropriate fishing net—which saves dolphins—Italy will be penalized by American companies? True, Tudjman is not expected to perform a *proskynesis* in the White House before the hegemon potentate. Instead, our Age of "Free" Trade has invented new ways for the supplicant to throw himself on his knees: before world bodies like the U.N., IMF, NATO, and the EU. And, of course, in exchange for the supplicant's cooperation, there will be the duly photographed handshakes in the Oval Office.

—*Thomas Molnar*

OBITER DICTA: This issue of *Chronicles* features two new poems by Katherine McAlpine, who has contributed regularly to our pages in recent years. Readers who recall with pleasure her "Memo to a Men's Movement Recruit" and "Epitaph for an Unfashionable Poet" will enjoy the sharp wit and characteristic grace of her poems in this issue.

Also featured this month is the work of Emanuel di Pasquale, who has previously published a book of verse, *Genesis*, as well as a large number of poems in journals such as the *American Poetry Review*, the *Nation*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the *Sewanee Review*. His poems are reminiscent of the quiet humor and descriptiveness of Robert Frost.

* * *

Samuel Francis, who writes the "Principalities and Powers" column each month, now has his own newsletter, the *Samuel Francis Letter*. Readers who have been unable to find Francis's syndicated columns anywhere else might wish to subscribe to this monthly publication, whose address is P.O. Box 19627, Alexandria, VA, 22320. A one-year subscription costs $35.

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Igor Kopelnitsky

The Evil of Banality

by Thomas Fleming

"The banality of evil" is one of those vapid and misleading phrases that can churn up a tidal wave in a mud puddle. In a trivial sense, Nazi bureaucrats were banal enough, but there was a heroic dimension to the evil of Hitler and Goering, a delirious striving toward the superhuman that commands our attention, if not respect. Hitler and Stalin were both bigger men than Roosevelt and therefore capable of more deliberate evil. (God save us from big men.) It has been some time since democratic politics called forth heroism, and every four years the American electorate could hear, if they were listening, the crank of the ratchet lowering the human level of American politicians by a notch or two.

What could have been more banal than the Republican Convention? The possibility of going to San Diego had never entered my mind, and watching it on television I experienced Dante's horror on first entering hell, but in my case the misery was all in the eye of the beholder. The real star of the proceedings was television itself, reducing everyone on both sides of the screen to two dimensions of *pointilliste* abstraction. If any of these lost souls had ever had a life, it was impossible to tell, now that they had reduced themselves to visual clichés: the perkiness of little Susie Molinari; the forward-pass progressivism of Jack Kemp, allegedly one of the first professional quarterbacks to have all his plays called from the bench (one of those stories which, even if false, was not invented by chance); the unctuous condescension of Colin Powell declaring his conviction that women had a right to kill their children and asking Republicans to tolerate diversity on this point—"Can't we all just get along?" Then there was the stirring patriotism of the nominee, telling us that newly arrived immigrants have the same right to the American dream as descendants of the Founders. If this means anything (highly unlikely as it is), Senator Dole would seem to have come around to Thurgood Marshall's opinion that aliens have the same rights as citizens. Later, addressing a meeting of black journalists, Dole repudiated the plank in the Republican platform denying welfare privileges to aliens. So much for the conservative strategy of winning the platform. "Here we go again . . . I'll be her fool again, one more time."

The Republican Convention combined the spontaneity of a meeting chaired by Ross Perot with the excitement of a rigged game show on a summer rerun. Much of the credit goes to Michael Deaver, the king of the influence peddlers and author of the defining apothegm of the Reagan years: "What I did may have been unethical, but it was not illegal." It *was* illegal, as it turned out, but criminal lobbying is a badge of honor in a party that nominates the Senator from Archer Daniels Midland, the benefactor of Gallo wineries, the defender of the Koch family from documented charges that they were scamming oil from reservation Indians, the friend of any downtrodden capitalist with a tax problem, the *Senator for Sale* (in the title of a recent book) who has sold (perhaps we should say "loaned") his vote so often that he cannot keep his commitments straight.

The high point of the convention was Liddy Dole going down into the audience like Oral Roberts about to heal the afflicted—which would seem to include a majority of the previous speakers. Lapsing into a Bogart pose (I watched the convention only between commercials), I thought, "You're good. Really good." It was nice, after the parade of freaks and feebes, to see a real woman for a change and the nearest thing to a man in the Republican leadership. Her touching account of her husband's injuries could almost make us forget that it was the first wife he dumped and not the trophy wife he picked up who took care of him after the war.

If center stage at the GOP convention was occupied by the lame, the halt, and the blind, the Democrats were determined

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not to be outdone, and their schedule promised an array of the physically, mentally, and morally impaired: the Brady Bill Bunch, a quadriplegic Superman, Jesse Jackson, Hillary the Commodities Whiz, and Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, recently back from an unauthorized trip to Nigeria, where she said she was consoling the dictator's wife for the loss of a child. Consolation could be a big business in Nigeria, where the leader has murdered thousands of his political opponents. It is, of course, only an accident that Carol's boyfriend and advisor has been a lobbyist for Nigeria. Like Jesse Jackson, the Senate's first black female has apparently never heard of the Logan Act.

In general, though, only the black delegates seemed normal. Perhaps it had something to do with the entertainment. As I watched the moon-faced white males and their fat wives swaying to the Macarena and twitching spasmodically to a group of gospel rappers, it was like a mass dramatic try-out—thousands of untalented amateurs doing their best to impersonate Steve Martin in *The Jerk*.

I was hoping against all hope for a better show from the Democrats, but it is too much to expect that they would repeat their Chicago performance of 1968. The best parts of the television coverage were the tributes to the 68'ers, solemnly assuring journalists that they had changed things. Only David Dellinger had the guts to say that in 1968 international business ruled the world, and they were still running things in 1996. Glorious it was to be alive in 1968, watching the crazies collide with the con-artists at the last good political convention, covered by a set of journalists who might just as well have been demonstrators or delegates: Norman Mailer was there playing the journalist; William Buckley and Gore Vidal had their famous cat fight; William Burroughs tape-recorded the convention, "exterminated" (i.e., randomly cut and spliced) the tape, and played it back, hoping to alter the delegates' consciousness—a perfect parallel for the conservatives' platform maneuvering at the '92 and '96 GOP conventions.

In 1968, the crazies were more original, and the pols more substantial. In 1996 Hubert Horatio Humphrey would tower over the Democratic Convention like a moral and intellectual giant. We are pygmies standing on the shoulders of pygmies, unable to see anything above our ancestors' privates.

I was asked by a network news show if I would be willing to comment on the political rhetoric both of the Democratic Convention and more generally of the campaign. I tentatively agreed and repented as soon as I put down the receiver. Luckily, the program eventually fell through. What could I have said? There was no rhetoric at either convention, except in the sense that both parties have made self-government a rhetorical question in the United States. If the orator, as defined by Quintilian, is "a good man skilled in speaking," our political leaders fail on both counts.

Let us pass over in silence any claims to virtue put forward by the well-paid supporters of both candidates and concentrate on the speechifying. President Clinton's idea of a refutation is to reduce his opponents' arguments to a string of imbecilic clichés—"There are those who say we should send our senior citizens out onto the ice floes to die from starvation and exposure"—before solemnly pronouncing, in the accents of a first grade teacher correcting a spelling test, "This is wrong." Senator Dole, despite his genius for the one-line put-down, has perfected a kind of Kansas dyslexia that made him the envy of George Bush—himself a master of incoherence.

One of the Podhoretzes, in describing the Bob Dole-Mark Helprin acceptance speech, used words like "sublime" and "luminous." To my ears it was the rhetorical equivalent of a Wyndham Hill album: a formless prettiness on the surface with nothing underneath—a sugarcoated M&M with a hollow center.

There is no point, either, in attacking the matter of political speeches, since both President Clinton and Senator Dole are mere actors, reciting—often without full comprehension—the texts their handlers have created for them. Bob Woodward, in *The Choice*, describes the dismay of Bob Dole's aides, every time the Senator begins to depart from the prepared remarks. The really strange part of this is not the supine compliance of men who want to "lead the free world" but the delusions of the handlers and consultants who seriously believe that they have crafted little masterpieces of persuasion that can strategically position their candidate to have the broadest appeal without offending any possible group.

We are stupid, but not perhaps in the way they think. I have talked to marketing experts from time to time who like to take credit for the success of products they have promoted. There are, of course, "geniuses" who can create television commercials (e.g., Burger King's Soviet beauty pageant) that are far wittier than any comedy show. For the most part, however, marketing really comes down to getting the product name on the air over and over and over. One of the most effective commercials in the history of television was the ancient Anacin spot with a clanking hammer in the brain. Anyone who has the money and the time can ultimately sell enough Bayer aspirin or Big Macs to make a profit, and if Mr. Clinton is the quintessential Big Mac (fat, insipid, vulgar), Bob Dole's candidacy is based on the same principle as an ad campaign for a product that is exactly like the generic alternative except for the brand name and higher price. What the pain-reliever doctors (of philosophy) recommend most is socialism, and it does not matter a great deal whether the label reads Democrat or Republican. Without product recognition (and the money spent to guarantee it), there is scarcely a Democrat or Republican who could get elected to office.

The very least we can expect from a politician is that he write his own speeches. I do not mean that he should not have researchers and advisors to assist him on technical points, but that he, not the handlers, should be in charge of basic policy, that he, not the speechwriters, should be responsible for the words he uses. In Hollywood they call it "creative control." When Mari Will put a speech on Hollywood decadence into Bob Dole's mouth, the candidate ended up passing judgment on films he had never seen, expressing ideas that had never occurred to him, using words that had passed from teleprompter to microphone without passing through his brain. Elect Mari Will, if you want a "family values" President, because Senator Dole does not know what *she* is talking about.

I should never presume to advise anyone on whom to vote for, but there are several obvious categories of politicians that should be rejected out of hand. Apart from men who do not think their own thoughts and speak their own words, there are politicians who do not stand by the interest groups and constituents who elected them. Politicians are caught in a bind, whether to carry out the wishes of the voters who elected them or cater to the needs of the special interests who fund their campaign. The code of the lobbyist was once explained to me by a Marxist "oral historian" who asked me if there was any lib-

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eral I could support. When I replied "Gene McCarthy," he snorted and said he preferred John Anderson, who "when he was bought, stayed bought."

The best we can expect from any politician is that he will regard himself as bought, at least in part, by the voters who elect him rather than as a wholly owned subsidiary of his funders. The Democrats, by this criterion, usually do better than the Republicans. Democrats get elected to office by promising to spend public moneys on women, racial minorities, the shiftless, and the immoral, and—by and large—they keep their promises. Bill Clinton is the exception, in promising to represent working- and middle-class people then turning around, after the election, to help the homosexuals who had given him money. But, as a traitor to his supporters, Clinton is an amateur compared with the Republicans who use the Nixon strategy to get elected every four years by appealing to white males and middle-class families. After the election, they turn back, like the proverbial dog to his vomit, to corporate tax cuts.

Selling out ordinary Americans to the rich is bad enough; in recent years, the buyers are increasingly non-American. The worst scandal of our public life is the ease with which overseas business interests, multinational corporations, and foreign governments can bribe American politicians into granting them favors. In many cases, the bribes come straight out of the taxpayers' pockets in the form of taxes and higher prices. American foreign policy these days sometimes seems like a tug of war between Israeli interests and Arab oil interests. The patriotic foreigners who buy up shares in the American government are only playing *Realpolitik* according to the rules, but there is no reason to vote for anyone who has taken a penny from AIPAC, Saudi Arabia, or South Korea.

Americans are said to be naive in worrying about the character of our politicians. We are naive, not because we think a man's character is an indication of how he will govern, but because we look at the wrong things. If the Clintons have an "open marriage," it means only that they are typical of the post-Christian Yuppies who hold the levers of power. If they have agreed to stay together for the sake of their child—or only for the sake of appearances—then President Clinton is far less culpable than politicians like Bob Dole, Newt Gingrich, and Phil Gramm, who trade in the mothers of their children for a younger model (the same goes for pro-choice mother of the year, Susie Molinari, who also traded up). If they break their vows to their spouses, just imagine what they will do to us strangers.

In choosing leaders of a Christian community, St. Paul advises, we should select only men with well-regulated households. I take this to include men who wear the pants in the family. We have had enough petticoat government in recent years, and I would not vote for any man whose wife takes more interest in politics than, say, Joan Mondale did, fretting about the arts, or Lady Bird Johnson, who planted bulbs all over the District of Columbia, or Pat Nixon, when she stood by her man with grace and dignity.

Most of these criteria come to a basic question of what Clyde Wilson often calls authenticity. An authentic man (I am not saying good, intelligent, or competent), an authentic man is what he is. If he is an upper-class twit like George Bush, he will not don a cowboy suit and drop the final "g" from his participles. Teddy Roosevelt was an aristocrat and did not care who knew it. If he is a cheap little haberdasher like Harry Truman, he will not put on airs (at least not more than he has to as President) like Jack Kennedy, descendant of bogtrotters, rumrunners, and political fixers, and—for all the Kennedys' cultural pretensions—one of the least intellectual men to sit in the White House. In conducting a televised tour of the White House in her breathy voice, Mrs. Kennedy came across like Marilyn Monroe discoursing on Proust. According to a recent book, Kennedy was the best golfer ever to be elected President, and yet he had to pretend to dislike playing a sport that was too obviously a rich man's game. Nothing is as it seems. Gerald Ford was probably the greatest athlete to be President, but the White House press corps devoted themselves, night and day, to collecting pictures of an awkward Ford, stumbling over his own shoelaces. Looking back, it now seems like an impossible dream that there were once apparently decent (I say nothing of their intellect or political views) men like Gerald Ford and Fritz Mondale, running for President.

A telltale sign that a man's authenticity is wearing thin is the habit of speaking of himself in the third person. "Bob Dole's gonna do this. . . . Bob Dole will never do that." Dole's handlers are working on the problem, but it is clear that the Senator has come to view himself the way John Wayne did near the end, as a kind of trade-marked property. Clinton is more careful, although in the 1992 campaign he was fond of referring to himself as "the comeback kid." Richard Nixon, faced with hostile criticism, could not avoid self-objectification, telling reporters after he lost the gubernatorial election in California: "You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore," and at the height of the Watergate crisis, "Your President is not a crook." Lyndon Johnson was probably less deluded than most crooked politicians, and when he told an astonished female aide, whose bed he was slipping into, "Make room fo' yo' President," it was probably not his ego that was foremost in his thoughts.

Third-person references are obviously an imperial style, but in the case of kings and conquerors, it is a useful device for keeping the sacred person above the fray. Julius Caesar composed his lying *Commentaries* in the third person, because (as one of our editors says) it would have been hard to say something like: "I broke faith with a German ally of the Roman people, killed his women and children, and used this slaughter as the pretext for a campaign against the peoples of Gaul who have never done us any harm."

For lesser men, this tic has the effect of fiction, like Faulkner's "Byron Bunch knows this." To see yourself as the hero of a novel is an adolescent temptation; grown men—apart from celebrities and politicians—eventually come to realize that everyone has his own play with his own script, and if he chooses to play a supporting role—"one that will do / To swell a progress, start a scene or two"—it may not be for the greater glory of Bill Clinton or Bob Dole.

What have I left out? "People who eat peppermint and puff it in your face," perhaps. If I go on in this vein I shall turn into Tito Perdue's *Lee*, a 72-year old man who goes about the streets beating the crud out of rude teenagers and illiterate librarians. Only fiction, apparently, can do justice to our age. The times require a W.S. Gilbert, and all we get is P.J. O'Rourke. It is not the banality of evil that defines the modern mind so much as the evil of banality.

I know they throw away most write-in ballots, but if and when I do vote in 1996, I am going to write in my own name, to show how little I think of the system. Tom Fleming wants your support. C

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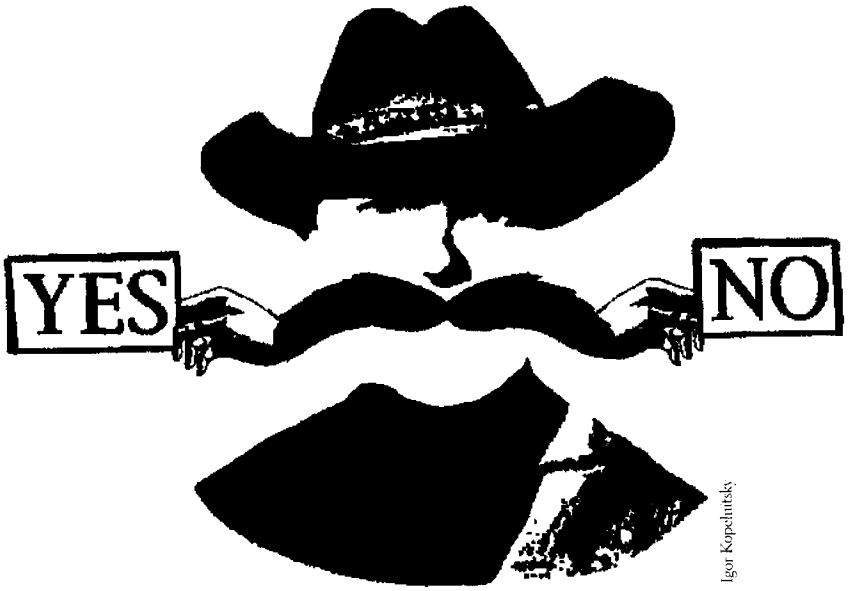
Election Day

A Means of State Control

by Robert Weissberg



Interpreting elections is a national spectator sport, offering as many "meanings" as there are board-certified spin doctors. Nevertheless, all of these disparate revelations, insights, and brilliant interpretations share a common, unthinking vision: elections, despite their divisive, contentious character, exist to facilitate citizen power over government. Whether ineptly or adeptly, honestly or dishonestly, government is supposed to be subjugated via mass electoral participation. This is, it might be said, The Great Democratic Belief of Popular Sovereignty.

Less understood, though hardly less significant, is that control flows the opposite way: elections permit government's effective management of its own citizens. The modern state's authority, its vast extractive capacity, its ability to wage war, its ever-growing power to regulate our lives, requires constant reinvigoration via the ballot box. Moreover, and even less obvious, properly administered elections promote cohesiveness, not acrimonious division. Indeed, this periodic reaffirmation of the political covenant may be elections' paramount purpose, relegating the actual choice among Tweedledee, Tweedledum candidates to mere historical details. Like the atmosphere, this phenomenon appears nearly invisible, escaping both popular attention and scrutiny from talking-head television pundits. Even scholars, those investigating civic matters of profound obscurity, with few exceptions (particularly my former colleague, Ben Ginsberg) are neglectful. Put succinctly, marching citizens off to vote—independent of their choice—is a form of conscription to the political status quo. Election day, like Christmas or Yom Kippur, is the high holiday, a day of homage and reaffirmation, in the creed of the modern state.

Those at the Constitutional Convention well understood this conscriptive function. Though the Founders are now fashionably branded as unrepresentative elitists who distrusted the downtrodden masses and oppressed women and toilers of color, what they never doubted was the political usefulness of elections. James Wilson and Elbridge Gerry openly acknowledged that a vigorous federal government required extensive popular consent, freely given by the ballot. Voters could not, and should not, guide policy, but without periodic popular authorization, how could the national government efficiently collect taxes, compel obedience to its laws, solicit military recruits or gain loyalty? This is what "no taxation without representation" is all about: the ritual of consent. Elections, however tumultuous or corrupt, bestowed legitimacy far better and more cheaply than brute force, bribery, appeals to divine right, or any alternative. Opposition to the direct elections of senators, predictably, arose from state sovereignty advocates—allowing citizens to vote for such a prominent national office could only enhance centralism.

Elections as a means of state aggrandizement, not popular control of government, was clearly grasped during the 19th century's march toward universal suffrage. Today's liberal vision of common folk clamoring "empowerment" via the vote is much overdrawn; extension of the suffrage was often "top-down." The modern, centralized bureaucratic state and plebiscitary elections are, by necessity, intimately connected. To Napoleon III and Bismarck the freshly enfranchised voter was the compliant participant in their push toward unified state

Robert Weissberg is a professor of political science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

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authority. Casting the national ballot liberated ordinary citizens from the influences of competitors—the church, provincial notables, kinfolk, and champions of localism. Elections soon became essential ceremonies of national civic induction, a process ever-further extended as wars evolved into expensive million-man national crusades.

Modern dictatorships are especially taken with elections, typically combined with some form of compulsory voting, as means of state domination. The Soviet Union's notorious single-party elections with 99+ percent turnout are the paradigmatic but hardly unique example. Many African nations boast of near unanimous turnout to endorse their beloved kleptocratic leader. The Pinochet government of Chile even went so far as to make nonvoting punishable by three months in prison and a $150 fine. While it is tempting to dismiss such choice-less, forced-march elections as shams, the investment of precious state funds and bureaucratic effort confirms that elections are far more than mechanisms of citizen control of government.

In general, the electoral process, whether in a democracy or a dictatorship, performs this citizen domestication function in various ways, but let us examine here only three mechanisms. To be sure, the connection between state aggrandizement and elections is not guaranteed, and much can go astray. Nevertheless, over time the two go together. The first mechanism might be called psychological co-optation via participation: I take part, cast my vote, therefore I am implicated. All of us have been "victims" of this technique beginning, no doubt, as children. Recall, for example, when mom wished your acquiescence to visit hated Aunt Nelly. Despotically demanding compliance, though possible in principle, was too costly. Instead, mom "democratically" discussed alternatives with you, including cleaning house or going to the ballet. Given such choices, you "freely" opted for visiting Nelly, and your subsequent complaints were easily met with "you freely decided."

Such co-optive manipulation extends beyond devious parenting; it is the essence of modern management psychology. Beginning in the 1920's, industrial psychologists realized that "worker involvement" usefully gained cooperation, especially when confronting unpleasant choices. Let workers conspicuously offer their "input" and they will be far more malleable. Internal "selling" to oneself flows from public choice. Personal participation need not even occur—it is the formal opportunity to add one's two cents, or the involvement of others, that is important. Provided executives define the range of options and control decision-making rules, this "worker empowerment" benefits, not subverts, management. That manipulative inclusion can be labeled "democratic" and "enlightened" and flatters "worker insight" is wonderful public-relations icing on the cake.

This process applies equally to elections. Recall the 1968 presidential contest—a highly divisive three-way race of Hubert Humphrey, Richard Nixon, and George Wallace in which the winner failed to gain a popular majority. Nevertheless, despite all the divisiveness, Ben Ginsberg and I discovered that views of national government, its responsiveness and concern for citizens, became more favorable following the election among voters than among nonvoters. This was also true among those choosing losing candidates. Involvement transcended and overpowered the disappointment of losing. Even a nasty, somewhat inconclusive campaign "juiced" citizen support for government. The pattern is not unique—the election ceremony improves the popularity of leaders and institutions regardless of voting choice.

Elections are also exercises in "Little Leagueism" to help prop up the political status quo. That is, potentially dangerous malcontents are involved in safe, organized activity under responsible adult supervision rather than off secretly playing by themselves. All things considered, better to have Lenin get out the vote, solicit funds, ponder polls, circulate petitions, or serve in Congress. This is equally true in democracies or dictatorships—regular electoral activity facilitates "conventionality" (regardless of ideology) among those who might otherwise drift to the dangerous, revolutionary edge. This is especially true where bizarre groups overall constitute a relatively small minority. At a minimum, humdrum details and ceaseless busy work hardly leaves any time for sitting around a café plotting revolution.

Even if all potential revolutionaries are not "domesticated" via the election process, the easy availability of elections helps keep the peace. Why risk mayhem when public employment by stuffing ballot boxes is so simple? The 1960's Black Power movement is the perfect poster child. The urban guerrilla movement back then seemed imminent—the infatuation with Franz Fanon's celebration of violence and similar mumbo-jumbo rhetoric, the macho allure of automatic weapons, and the gleeful "in-your-face" public paramilitarism demeanor. Urban riots were everywhere; Newark and Detroit had become virtual garrison states. Comparisons with Northern Ireland or Lebanon were not absurd.

Nevertheless, the pedestrian seduction of public office easily overcame this intoxication with violence. The Malcolm X Democratic Club and similar entities suddenly materialized while numerous cleaned-up revolutionary agitators entered "the system" as "progressive Democrats," often occupying positions set aside for minorities. The "Black Mayor" became institutionalized. The passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, its extensions, and generous subsequent interpretations made black electoral mobilization a national government priority. The federal registrar served as the neighborhood convenience store for "selling out." Within a decade, the once-familiar "revolutionary" agitator spewing forth clichés about insurrection was a political antique. By the 1980's, it was impossible for a "take-to-the-hills" Black Power revolutionary even to think about competing with elections.

The transformation of revolutionary "Black Power" into humdrum conventionality highlights the third way elections domesticate potential disruption: tangible inducement (or bribery, in plain English) to malcontents. The "cooling out" via granting a piece of the action is a time-honored American tradition, from 19th-century populists and socialists to the 1960's antiwar movement. Entering "the system," at least in highly permeable American politics, wonderfully corrupts revolutionary ardor. At a minimum, rabble-rousers in remission must come out of hiding to collect their salary, sit in their offices, boss around subordinates, issue press releases, accept financial contributions, and, if necessary, bounce a check. If Maxine Waters (D-CA) seems like an out-of-control ballistic missile, imagine her unchecked by the obligations of high public office. As a comfortable congresswoman, she is far more constrained than if preaching the street-corner revolutionary gospel or a tenured professor with an endowed chair. Ditto for the thousands of others contemplating revolutionary violence

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but who now owe their prestige and income to elective office. Let the most ambitious attend endless dull committee meetings. The very existence of this electoral opportunity, apart from bodies enrolled, is critical—the prospect of a few well-paid prestigious sinecures, like playing for the NBA, can work wonders on millions.

This relationship between rising electoral involvement and the demise of 1960's-style revolutionary radicalism helps to explain our collective blind eye toward the extensive corruption in "minority politics." Why do the Protectors of Democracy, from the ACLU to Common Cause, seem so unconcerned with racial gerrymandering, districts comprised largely of illegal aliens, abuses of absentee ballots, outright selling of votes and other nefarious customs when such practices bring blacks and Hispanics to office? More must be involved than just having Third World standards. The answer is simple, though seldom articulated: rotten boroughs, our versions of autonomous homelands, are part of the bargain to guarantee domestic peace. The actual outcome is irrelevant; what is important is that up-and-comers, would-be "community leaders," are brought into "the system." Fundamentally, shipping a few dozen would-be agitators off to legislatures or city councils, even felons and dope addicts, hardly puts the national enterprise at serious risk; consider it midnight basketball for the civic-minded. If Washington, D.C., can "survive" Marion Barry, the entire nation is bulletproof.

Elections are but one of many tools of social control and, as with all tools, mere use does not guarantee success. Critical details of administration and organization must be attended to—matters of timing, suffrage, modest enforcement of anticorruption laws, countervailing power within government, and so on. Nor do elections come with an unlimited lifetime warranty to remedy deep political problems. It is doubtful whether elections would solve much in Bosnia or Rwanda, while the jury is still out for Russia and South Africa. Elections are wondrous, circuitous devices, but not all-powerful magic.

Having described this little understood but critical purpose, what lessons can be learned? Two in particular stand out. Most evidently, if one wishes to maintain one's ideological purity, remain uncontaminated in the quest for a higher truth, avoid elections. Those seeking to transform society via "playing the game" will inevitably be metamorphosed by the game itself. This lesson should be heeded by everyone from fundamentalist religious groups to those promoting the redistribution of political power in the United States. Purity and empowerment via elections do not mix. The loss of revolutionary zeal among the formerly faithful, an inclination toward "wheeling and dealing," and being comfortable with petty enticements need not result from flawed character; pedestrian opportunism comes with the territory. If this seems farfetched, one only has to review our history: virtually every splinter group, no matter how ideologically noble or distinct, that ventured into the electoral arena, has been mainstreamed and today exists only as a domesticated, digested fragment within the Democratic or Republican parties.

The surrender of purity via electoral absorption need not, despite advice to the contrary, be a particular good deal. There are costs, and no guarantee of gain, for getting into bed with the state. You might even get a serious rash. Groups that have devoted themselves extensively to electoral achievement, especially for economic advancement, have seldom, if ever, accomplished much beyond politics itself. This has surely been the case with black infatuation with electoral success since the mid-1960's. Despite all the voting rights laws, federal court interventions, registration drives, and elected black officials, blacks as a group continue to lag behind whites on most indicators of accomplishment. In some ways, conditions have deteriorated. By contrast, Asians and Indians have made remarkable strides without any electoral empowerment. Like polo, electoral politics may be a worthwhile sport only after first becoming economically successful. How this plunge into electoral politics will play out for today's moral issues—abortion, pornography, religion, sexuality—remains to be seen.

The second lesson is the converse: if domestication is the objective, get the would-be revolutionaries, extremists, grumblers, and malcontents enrolled. Are antigovernment militias posing a problem? Take a clue from the Motor Voter bill and allow voter registration at all firearms and survival equipment stores. Voting, even corrupt voting, should be as convenient as possible. Rig the district boundaries so that leaders must serve their time in state capitals and Washington, D.C., consorting with generous lobbyists. Make those with talent precinct captains, election judges, convention delegates, county commissioners, and paid advisors to established political parties. Within the decade the militiamen will be as threatening as an agitated American Legion post forced to give up its bingo.

In sum, as we observe the 1996 campaign, we should not be distracted by the details. Far more goes on than selecting candidates. Despite the acrimony and divisiveness, all the talk of a people freely exercising sovereignty, we are witnessing a ceremony for reinvigorating the covenant between citizen and state. All sorts of would-be troublemakers are being domesticated and brought into "the system." Those who attempt to escape will be brought to the attention of the Department of Justice.

Neighborly Care

by Emanuel di Pasquale

My neighbor, no doubt well-meaning,
has hung a BEWARE OF DOG sign on my side
of the fence.
His dog, a hog free in a watermelon field,
barks at the sun and moon, my wife's old mother,
my children, straying bees, birds and winds.

Amid the universe of Spring green,
my neighbor's sign pulls at my eyes.
Two years of sleeping half a stone's throw off,
and this is his only nod at my existence.
He has made the first move.
I answer by hanging a BEWARE OF CHILDREN sign
on his side of the fence.
The next move is his.
I load my .22.

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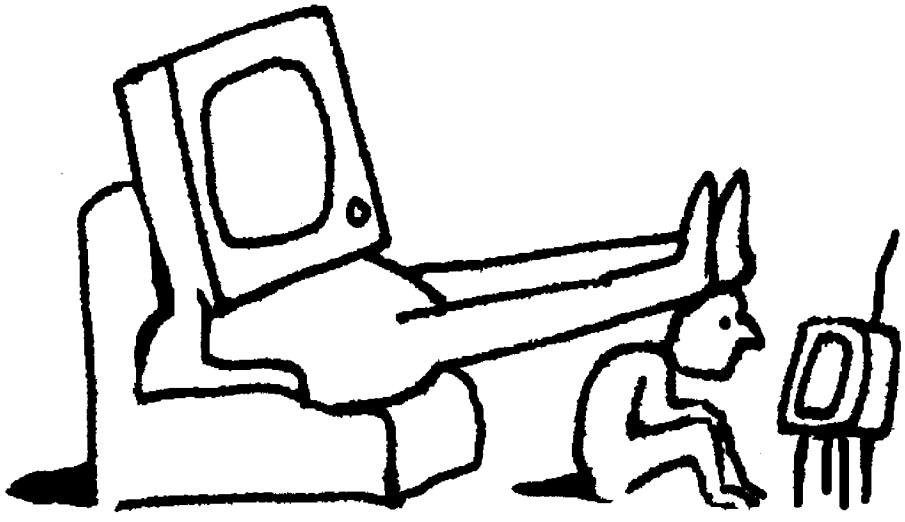
A House Without Doors

Vote Fraud in America

by James J. Condit, Jr.



Igor Kopelnitsky

For decades now CBS, ABC, and NBC have pretended on election night to be in hot competition to project the "winner" and "loser." We know the act well: Dan, Peter, or Tom comes on the air and solemnly intones, "We can now project that President X is the winner in Florida."

As a viewer, I imagined bespectacled analysts sweating in back rooms, perhaps 30 accountants nervously crunching numbers—all in an attempt to get their anchorman on the air first with the projected winner. But now we know it was all a hoax. For all of the networks (CNN included) have been getting the exact same numbers, at the exact same time, from the exact same source—from a company that the networks appear to own jointly: Voter News Service (VNS).

How reliable is VNS? In the Iowa Caucuses, VNS worked with lightning speed, ostensibly assembling the results of over 2,000 caucus gatherings, analyzing the data, and turning them over to the Associated Press, which announced the winner *exactly one minute* after the caucuses had opened and clearly *before* even one vote had been cast! VNS employees are either prophets, or the whole process smells like the anchovies on last week's pizza.

Though VNS has changed its name regularly, its headquarters are still at 225 W. 34th St., New York City, and it has been the exit polling arm of the big TV networks since at least 1972. One of the few mentions in the mainstream media of this little-known organization was in the March 2, 1992, issue of *Time* magazine, where a box on page 22 entitled "The Morning After" confirmed that all of the major TV networks are using this same exit polling source.

So, if the major media are willing to pretend to be competing on election night when in reality they are cooperating in total harmony, what other shenanigans could be afoot?

James J. Condit, Jr., is the director of the Cincinnatus Political Action Committee and Precinct Project Institute in Cincinnati, Ohio. He has studied and battled vote fraud since 1979.

Computerized Fraud

Once upon a time, Americans voted by paper ballot. At the end of the day after the polls had closed, neighborhood people—Democrats, Republicans, Independents—worked together to count the votes in their polling place before the ballots left their precinct. The count was then posted at the precinct polling place for all to see. This is the only way to ensure a verifiable election. Variations of method are possible, but the basic counting of paper ballots in public view, with the results posted at the polling place *before* the ballots leave each neighborhood precinct, are essential to ensure a fair and honest count.

To rig an election with the above safeguards built in, one would have to bribe many hundreds of people, including key Democrats and Republicans in each precinct being rigged. But the people bribed at each precinct would nevertheless have access only to a tiny fraction of the vote. There would be no hope of throwing an election from a central location with the push of a button or the flick of a switch.

However, the election process has changed in most venues to make it impossible for either citizen or candidate to monitor or check anything on election night, and concern over how the votes are counted seems to have vanished altogether. The average American voting in 1996 is predisposed to believe the results announced on election night. Skeptics are asked, "Can you prove there was computer fraud? If you can't prove it, nobody's going to listen."

First of all, whether a citizen can *prove* vote fraud is not the question. The question is whether the Board of Elections officials can prove that *they* are running a verifiable election, with a paper trail and checks and balances. After all, these administrators are supposed to be servants of the people. Instead, most of them now act as if the business of elections is their specialty, if not their rightful monopoly. In fact, any attempt by any American citizen or candidate to monitor an election today will

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most likely land the person in jail. Dan Giroux, the Buchanan campaign coordinator for southwest Ohio, accompanied by his attorney, was refused permission to observe the count by Hamilton County Board of Elections Director Bruce Taylor (Republican). Why?

In a rare but superb news story on the evening of the 1988 presidential election, Dan Rather of *CBS Evening News* had this exchange with computer expert Howard J. Strauss of Princeton University:

> Rather: Realistically, could the fix be put on a national election?
> Strauss: Get me a job with the company that writes the software for this program. [Strauss was referring to the most common computer program in use.] Then I'd have access to one third of the votes. Is that enough to fix a general election?

In an earlier clip during this CBS interview, Strauss had dropped this bombshell: "When it comes to computerized elections, there are no safeguards. It's not a door without locks, it's a house without doors."

This CBS spot came on the heels of an article by Ronnie Duggar entitled "The Dangers of Computerized Voting" in the November 7, 1988, issue of *New Yorker* magazine. A 1988 government study, "Accuracy, Integrity, and Security in Computerized Vote-Tallying" by Roy G. Saltman of the National Bureau of Standards, also tackled this subject, but it overlooked two notorious cases in Cincinnati. One case involved a former Cincinnati Bell employee who stated in a sworn deposition that he had been involved in wiretapping into the Cincinnati computer on election night in 1979 for the purpose of altering the vote count. The other case involved a group of women who in 1985 were videotaped using common household tweezers to pluck out tabs from punchcard ballots on election night; three years earlier, parallel activity had been captured on film in Miami, Florida, when self-proclaimed members of the League of Women Voters were videotaped using styluses to punch tabs out of punchcard ballots.

But perhaps the best summary of this subject is found in *Votescam: The Stealing of America* (1993) by James and Kenneth Collier. After quoting the first words uttered by President-elect George Bush in his November 8, 1988, victory speech in Houston, Texas—"We can now speak the most majestic words a democracy can offer: 'The people have spoken'"—the Colliers comment:

> It was not "the People" of the United States who did "the speaking" on that election day, although most of them believed it was, and still believe so. . . . In fact, the People did not speak at all. . . . The voices of computers—strong, loud, authoritative, unquestioned in their electronic finality. . . . The computers that spoke in November 1988 held in their inner workings small boxes that contained secret codes that only the sellers of the computers could read. The programs, or "source codes," were regarded as "trade secrets." The sellers of the vote-counting software zealously guarded their programs from the public, from election officials, from everyone—on the dubious grounds that competitors could steal their ideas if the source codes were open to inspection. . . . So why can't the public know what those secret source codes instruct the computer to do? . . . How else can the public be reasonably assured that they are participating in an unrigged election where their vote actually means something? Yet one of the most mysterious, low-profile, covert, shadowy, questionable mechanisms of American democracy is the American vote count.

Note: In every case where disputes over computerized vote fraud have reached the trial level, the presiding judge has blocked any inspection of the software program used to tabulate the votes in the disputed election.

The 1996 GOP Primaries

The first GOP contest of the current presidential race was the Alaskan caucus on February 6, 1996. Alaskan Republicans participated by showing up at a predetermined site and physically voting right on the spot. The result was then counted and announced in front of everyone. If voting was done by raised hands, the results were seen by all present. Where paper ballots were used, the ballots were checked and rechecked with onlookers from every camp—then and there. Pat Buchanan won the Alaskan caucus (in the teeth of sustained propaganda from the mainstream media), beating Bob Dole two-to-one, and Phil Gramm four-to-one.

Next came the Louisiana primary, which had been tailored to guarantee a victory for neighboring Texas Senator Phil Gramm. Louisiana was largely a voting machine election, and so not, strictly speaking, verifiable. There are too many ways (well-documented ways) that a voting machine can be rigged without the voters being able to detect it. But in this primary, with only 42 voting locations for the entire state, any observer could see the long lines of patient citizens wearing Buchanan paraphernalia. And with the Buchanan campaign conducting some of its own exit polls, stealing the election would have been risky business. Though Buchanan somehow lost a delegate overnight, he was awarded 13 delegates to Gramm's eight.

Next came the Iowa Caucuses, where Senator Dole for months was widely touted as the state's "third senator" by all four of the major TV networks. I landed in Dubuque, Iowa, about three weeks before the February 12th caucus to work for a Buchanan victory. What immediately caught my attention was that all four major TV networks were publishing polls purporting that 28 percent of Iowans were for Dole, 26 percent for Forbes, and 12 percent for Buchanan. Then, two days before the caucuses, all four major networks simultaneously changed their tune. Suddenly Forbes was dropping like a rock due to his "negative" advertising. Hedging their bets at the last minute, the networks now spoke of 40 percent undecided. Observing this firsthand fueled my long-held suspicion: the polls released by the networks are designed more to mold public opinion than to reflect it. But in this case, the propaganda had failed. People were still flocking to Buchanan.

Yet, this strong support for Buchanan notwithstanding, at four minutes *before* 7:00 P.M., Central Time—four minutes *before* the Iowa Caucuses were to *begin*—Peter Jennings announced on ABC that Dole was the projected winner on the purported basis of a network entrance poll. At *one minute after* 7:00, the AP wire announced the same thing.

Contrast this with the recent Israeli election, where, despite exit polling, no media were able to project the winner until three days after the election. Why? Because that was a real

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election with checks and balances. No one could possibly rig it from a central location.

At the end of caucus night the major networks reported that Dole had indeed edged out Buchanan (who was supposed to receive only 12 percent of the vote according to the polls being published by *all four major TV networks* only three days earlier) 26 to 23 percent out of 100,000 votes cast, with the other candidates trailing far behind. However, the next morning something came to light which calls into question the legitimacy of these published results. Had Buchanan really "lost" Iowa, or was it stolen from him? What happened in Dubuque County may hold the key.

Dubuque County, Iowa

The people of Dubuque County, Iowa, ran a completely open and honest election. The county's 41 precincts caucused in 41 classrooms at two local high schools. The participants in each classroom voted on easily read paper ballots, and the ballots were counted at the front of the classroom with candidate representatives welcome to observe. Representatives from competing factions in each classroom then ran their results down the hall to the county chairman, who waited with a cell phone. The county chairman invited each group to stay as he phoned in the results—just to be sure he did not make a mistake. The results from all 41 precincts in the county were then posted on a chalkboard where representatives from the various campaigns could double check them. Everything checked out: Buchanan 870, Dole 339, Keyes 245, the rest far behind. (A copy of the official tally sheets from all 41 precincts in Dubuque County are on file.)

But where had that GOP county chairman, as well as all the rest of the local Iowa Republican caucus leaders, been directed to call in his results? To the GOP State Committee? To the Iowa Secretary of State? No, to VNS in New York City. This means that the GOP state party had willingly abdicated its responsibility by turning over the vote tabulation to a media-controlled service—VNS. Indeed, in a letter to an outraged constituent dated June 6, 1996, Senator Charles Grassley admits: "Since 1988, the Iowa Caucuses have operated under the system whereby the precinct gives its results to the county, which, in turn passes the information on to the 'official' reporting outlet, the Voter News Service (VNS). The State Republican Party has no role in this reporting process and no independent verification of the votes. VNS is the first entity to get the results and then it reports them." (The Senator is wrong on one point. In the vast majority of cases where the precincts in a county are not meeting at one or two centralized locations, each precinct caucus leader calls directly to VNS in New York City.)

So how did VNS handle its stewardship in Dubuque County during the 1996 GOP Iowa Caucuses? Badly, and perhaps criminally. By the next morning, only ten hours later, VNS had sent false (or falsified) results back to the Associated Press to be published all over Iowa. Buchanan had "lost" 13 percent of his vote in Dubuque County as it passed through the VNS and AP offices on its way back to the *Des Moines Register*. The AP reported that Buchanan had garnered only 757 votes—down from the 870 he had actually received. If VNS shorted Buchanan even four percent on average across Iowa, then Patrick J. Buchanan, not Senator Robert Dole, won the Iowa Caucuses.

Calls from multiple witnesses to GOP state headquarters and VNS brought arrogant, insulting responses. There was no interest in seriously discussing, let alone correcting, the "mistake." VNS admitted nothing. Iowa GOP headquarters insisted that they were in VNS's hands, and had to wait for the "official results"—which, as of Labor Day, had still not been published. Copies of the February 13, 1996, *Des Moines Register*, the *Cedar Rapid Gazette*, and a final fax made to the various campaigns from VNS are on file. A comparison of these sources against the official tally proves that 13 percent (or 113 votes) disappeared from the Buchanan column overnight.

How? Why? First, this incident proves that fraudulent tallies can indeed make it through "the system," even though eyewitnesses had been present at the local level to verify the true count from beginning to end. All VNS needed in this case (ultimately a Republican Party event) was the abdication of all responsibility by the Republican Party of Iowa, which Senator Grassley confirms did indeed occur. In most elections, however, the circle of acquiescing public "servants" must be widened to include state *and* county election officials, who in fact rely on experts from a handful of computer programming companies nationwide. (According to Ronnie Duggar's November 1988 article in the *New Yorker*, one company, Shouptronic, accuses B.R.C./Cronus of having a virtual monopoly on counting votes in the United States.) These companies provide election night "services," usually at outrageously expensive fees. The state and county officials sign the results placed in front of them by these helpful experts. VNS provides the "projections" based on the alleged exit polls, which are in turn announced by the big four TV networks shortly after the polls close. The early projections invariably come true. As always, because of its integral relationship to ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, and AP, VNS can count on little scrutiny (usually none) from the mainstream press.

Second, if our impromptu team had not been in Iowa watching for vote fraud, chances are that no one would have caught the still uncorrected falsification in Dubuque County. Third, it is important to note that the citizens of Iowa fulfilled their responsibility honestly and thoroughly in Dubuque County. After phoning their results into VNS as they were directed to do by State Republican headquarters, they went home confident that they had done their civic duty. Isn't this the way it is in all 50 states and all 3,075 counties?

Arizona

A contrast of the Arizona primary with the Iowa Caucuses speaks volumes. In Arizona, Buchanan was attracting large crowds everywhere. He was doing every radio show in the state. His signs were seemingly everywhere. Forbes, even after an overwhelming media blitz, was drawing comparatively listless crowds in the few places he showed up. Dole had stiff-armed the people of Arizona by not even participating in the primary debate. He only visited Arizona once between October 11, 1995, and primary day, February 27, 1996.

Karen Johnson, the Buchanan Campaign Arizona State Coordinator, got a call on the afternoon of the election from Governor Fife Symington. The governor congratulated her on what he said would be a *decisive* Buchanan victory based on his sources inside CBS. Senator McCain drafted a congratulatory letter that was never issued due to sudden "reversals of fortune" right after the polls closed. In fact, all four networks (Judy Woodruff at CNN was especially emphatic) asserted right after

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the polls closed in Arizona that "their exit polls" showed that Dole would definitely come in third, and that it was between Forbes and Buchanan for first place. But then some computer magic occurred, and Buchanan, we are told, was in a distant third. In fact, all four of the major TV networks called the primary election *wrong* based on VNS exit polls! We have apologies on tape from Ted Koppel (ABC) and Bernard Shaw (CNN). ABC's Hal Bruno offered the lame excuse that the networks got it wrong because they had never reported on an Arizona primary before.

Space will not allow a full analysis of the dubious "exit polls" supposedly conducted by VNS every election day (though an indispensable scrutiny of the subject can be found in *Votescam*). Likewise, the explosive subject of absentee ballots must be relegated to another time. Early reports tried to explain Forbes' victory in Arizona by absentee ballots, which had been uncharacteristically counted by the time the polls had closed. Nor is there space to examine in depth the special law passed by the Arizona legislature *forbidding* a recount in this one primary election. And only brief mention can be made of the shocking and sudden seizure of ballot boxes in the Phoenix area at about two o'clock in the afternoon of election day—under the pretext of getting an "early start" on the count. Also, we must gloss over the 60,000 duplicate white voter cards that were issued to voters in the Phoenix area.

The issuing of these duplicate voting cards was admitted in the final election report. But don't worry! Election officials assure us that only *two* people had voted twice. They had done elaborate cross checking, you understand, after the election. When asked by *Votescam* author Jim Collier for the paperwork and work orders verifying that such a comprehensive check had been done (per the impossible, for how would the election officials know who the duplicate voters had voted for?), the election officials stonewalled. They produced nothing to back their claim, and have produced nothing to this day, though they are supposed to be, remember, servants of the people.

And still looming over all of this is Arizona's computerized vote-counting system. On the day of the primary, I called Arizona's state elections director, Lisa Daniels. I am grateful that she took my call, for many in her position would not have. I asked her, "Who programmed the computers that are going to count the votes tonight in Arizona?" Her answer: "I think in [she named one southern county] that [she named a husband and wife team] programmed the computer." I followed up, "How about the rest of the state?" She replied, "I can get you the name of the company that did it, and maybe they can tell us the person who programmed the software."

Now the point of this story is not to ridicule Lisa Daniels. Her sincerity is proven by her willingness to answer my call. But a week later she would sign a document swearing that the ballot results were true and accurate—although she, as the state's elections director, had absolutely no way of verifying the results she was legitimizing with her signature and did not even know who had programmed the computers responsible for these results. Again, this is not surprising to those few of us who have been doggedly trodding this road for some years now. Most of the election officials do not know any more about computer programming than the average citizen. They are politicos on the way up. They need the job. They are told that on election night such and such a company (handsomely paid) comes in and runs the computers and tabulates the voting. They then sign the results.

What Can We Do?

It is imperative that we act immediately, for as bad as things are now, the situation could grow worse. For example, almost all "mechanical" voting machines now have a small computer integrated into their inner workings. In many venues, computers are in use which send only a bleep of energy (no paper trail) for each vote recorded. We are supposed to make a blind "act of faith" that these bits of cyber-energy are accurately recorded and tallied. The possibility of fraud increases dramatically when phone voting and voting by mail are considered. The latter method is popular with the media, and the state of Oregon, in fact, has already "elected" a left-wing senator via the U.S. Post Office. The "conservative" Republican who "lost" this completely unverifiable "election" (which took place over several weeks) wasn't smart enough to hold office anyway, since he apparently failed to object to such a corrupt process. Ross Perot brought "mail order" elections to a new level of silliness when he allowed e-mail, faxes, and mail-ins to be counted in the process which nabbed him this year's Reform Party nomination. One person I ran into at the Republican National Convention in San Diego showed me four Reform Party ballots that he could have used had he desired to do so.

Since the major TV networks have gone so far as to hide the existence of VNS and its fellow travelers from the American people for over two decades, and since 99.9 percent of the officeholders in the United States are petrified of the big media, there is little hope at this time of a bona fide investigation into VNS and the handful of election-night "service providers." But thousands of alerted citizens can rally behind a strategy to force this issue into the open.

There is a little-known law still enforced by the Federal Communications Commission stating that radio and television stations must carry the message of political candidates, provided such commercials do not contain profanity. If the station refuses to run the candidate's message, then he or she has the right to file immediately for, and receive, ownership of the license of that station. Through a willing candidate, citizens can make their voices heard on the issue of vote fraud, or on any other issue, for that matter.

My organization's current goal is to raise money for radio and cable TV commercials nationwide to highlight the importance of restoring verifiable elections. We mounted our first offensive during the week of the Republican Convention in San Diego, and over a three-day period, 65 radio commercials were run on KOGO and KSDO; some of them ran locally during the Rush Limbaugh, Gordon Liddy, and Michael Reagan shows.

If fair and free elections are ever to reign in America again, citizens in every county of the country must organize and demand easily read paper ballots, hand-counted by neighbors in each precinct in full public view, with the results posted at each polling place before the ballots leave the precinct.

Millions of our ancestors have fought and bled and died in an effort to protect our right to free and fair elections and to an orderly, peaceful transfer of power. The time is long overdue for the current generations to renew their commitment to this precious right, and individuals interested in learning more about vote fraud may visit our Internet site (www.networkusa.org) or write us at Cincinnatus PAC, P.O. Box 11339, Cincinnati, Ohio 45211, or phone: 513-984-4284.

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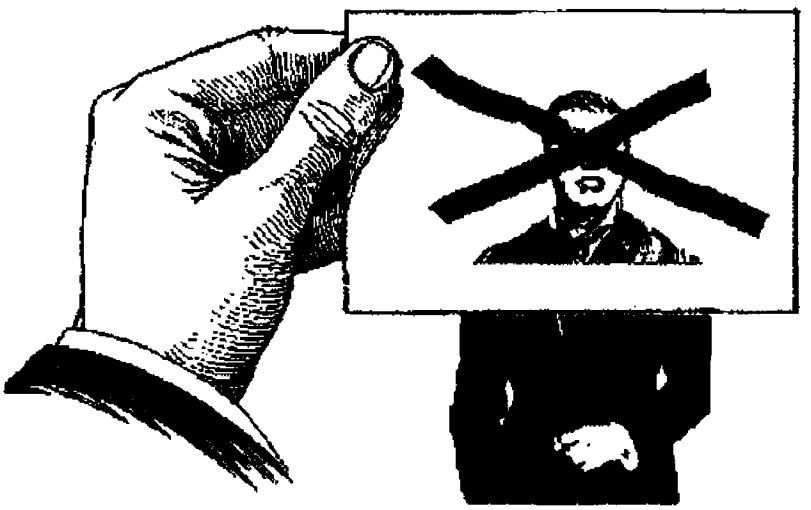
None of the Above

by Greg Kaza



Igor Kopelnitsky

I am running against myself in the November 5 general election. For the second time in my brief legislative tenure, I am providing constituents with "None of the Above" (NOTA) adhesive ballot stickers. Michigan election law does not provide a NOTA option, but it does allow write-in campaigns using stickers. So I have produced NOTA stickers, and made them available in the state House district that I represent in suburban Detroit. I believe every legislator should offer this choice to voters.

Don't get me wrong: I still intend on voting for myself next month. I am confident that I can beat NOTA. But I also realize that there are many constituents who do not like me or my Democratic opponent. Far better that they participate in the democratic process by casting a ballot for NOTA than by staying home on election day and not voting at all.

I also acknowledge that I am motivated by self-interest: opposition to a political class that is largely smug, insular, and openly hostile to democratic reform. My colleagues in the Michigan legislature are, for the most part, confused or angry about my NOTA campaign. They adhere to a "pre-term limits paradigm" that severely limits the parameters of debate. In 1992, most of them opposed term limits with a special vehemence while the people of Michigan approved the measure 59 to 41 percent. Four years later, most legislators still oppose term limits, some bitterly. Unfortunately for them, the issue is no longer "Should we impose term limits?" The people have answered that issue at the ballot box. Rather, the question today is, "How do we go *beyond* term limits?"

Political elites in both major parties oppose NOTA as a reform. In dismissing NOTA as disruptive, they ignore elections like the 1991 Louisiana gubernatorial race between Republican David Duke and the ethically challenged Democrat Edwin Edwards. Observers dubbed the race "the wizard versus the lizard." In a Mason-Dixon poll taken prior to the vote, 66 percent of Louisiana voters supported a NOTA option. In a hypothetical election against Duke and Edwards, the poll found that NOTA received 30 percent of the vote.

A NOTA option, then, would give voters more choice by giving them the power to vote against incumbents undeserving of support. But there are other reasons for NOTA. These include giving voters the option to vote against candidates who resort to negative campaigning, and leveling the playing field between incumbents and challengers. A large NOTA vote would increase the chances that a serious challenger could be recruited to run against an incumbent the next time around. More importantly, NOTA is a reform measure that passes constitutional muster. Unlike federal term limits, found unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, NOTA imposes no additional qualifications on congressional membership. "While term limits create an absolute barrier to the candidacy of certain incumbents based on the length of their prior service," Blair T. O'Connor writes in the *Valparaiso University Law Review*, "a NOTA ballot option creates no such substantive qualifications on candidacy. NOTA merely adds to the options on the ballot. It does not remove certain ballot options based on unconstitutional qualifications." NOTA does not interfere with the right of citizens to vote freely for the candidate of their choice. Nor does it infringe on the right of individuals to associate with a candidate's political beliefs. "Incumbent candidates are free to advance the political goals of their party," O'Connor notes, "provided that they win reelection by defeating their challengers, including NOTA."

There are two ways in which NOTA can be implemented: binding and nonbinding. A binding NOTA would provide that if NOTA won a plurality of the vote in an election, the office would be declared vacant and a new election would be held to fill the office. A nonbinding NOTA provides that the candidate who receives the most votes would win and take office, even if NOTA receives a plurality of votes. Thus, a nonbinding NOTA is largely symbolic in nature, allowing voters to express dissatisfaction with the candidates seeking office, negative campaign-

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Greg Kaza is a Michigan state representative (Republican-Rochester Hills).

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ing, or politicians and government in general.

One of the most dramatic examples of NOTA encouraging democratic reform occurred in the former Marxist-Leninist nations of Eastern Europe. In March 1989, semifree elections for the Congress of People's Deputies were held in the Soviet Union for the first time since the Russian Revolution. More than 90 percent of the candidates were members of the Communist Party. Opposition political parties were prevented from organizing. But the Russian people were empowered, analyst Steve Lilienthal of the Free Congress Foundation noted, "by the election law permitting them to cross out the names of candidates they found unacceptable." The *New York Times* reported that "by crossing them [the candidates] all out" the Russian people cast their ballots "for the equivalent of 'none of the above.'" NOTA emerged as a critical factor because Communist Party candidates needed a majority vote to win election. Within days of the election, the *Washington Post* reported that in more than 150 of the 1,500 districts where the electoral choice was limited to Communist Party apparatchiks, "a majority of voters crossed out every name on the ballot, forcing new elections." One Moscow-based diplomat observed, "It is hard to imagine the public shame of running against yourself—and losing." In runoff elections, more than 100 communist candidates were defeated.

The NOTA process was repeated in June 1989 in Poland, where voters were able to cross off the names of candidates they rejected. Among the unopposed communists defeated was Polish Prime Minister Mieczyslaw Rakowski and seven other members of the ruling Politburo. The *Economist* reported: "Poles delighted in crossing out the names of top officials, just as Soviet voters had done in March." The *New York Times* reported, "More unsettling, though [to the Communist Party], was the negative vote." In runoff elections, candidates endorsed by the long-banned free trade union Solidarity won a majority of the open seats. "NOTA is not nihilism," Lilienthal said. "Instead, it expresses the belief that they (voters) should be able to elect leaders truly worthy of their trust."

Americans interested in NOTA need not look as far as Poland or the former Soviet Union. Nevada has used a nonbinding NOTA since 1976. The state's law reads, in part:

> Every ballot upon which appears the names of candidates for any statewide offices or for President and Vice President of the United States shall contain for each office an additional line equivalent to the lines on which the candidates' names appear and placed at the end of the group of lines containing the names of the candidates for that office. Each additional line shall contain a square in which the voter may express his choice of that line in the same manner as he would express his choice of a candidate, and the line shall read "None of these candidates."

Under Nevada law, if NOTA receives a majority vote, the human candidate receiving the next highest vote total still wins the election. "Although 'None Of These Candidates' cannot actually win the race," Nevada Secretary of State Cheryl A. Lau explained, "it is an opportunity for voters to register opposition." Or embarrass an unresponsive incumbent politician. According to Nevada election records, NOTA placed ahead of both Republican George Bush and Democrat Ted Kennedy in the state's 1980 presidential primaries. Then-President Jimmy Carter barely defeated NOTA that year, winning 38 percent to NOTA's 34 percent. NOTA has finished first in Nevada elections in 1976, 1978, and 1986. These victories have occurred in Republican congressional primaries and a Democratic primary for state treasurer.

Nevada's experiment with NOTA has attracted the attention of legislators in other Western states. In 1993, Colorado State Senator Tilman Bishop, a Republican, introduced binding NOTA legislation that would apply in federal as well as state elections. Texas State Representative Billy Clemons, a Republican, sponsored a bill the same year that includes a nonbinding NOTA option in county and state elections. In 1994, then-California Acting Secretary of State Tony Miller observed of Nevada's experience with NOTA: "It has not been abused nor has it been disruptive to the process. But it has given Nevada voters another choice and they have occasionally opted for it. Good for them!"

University of Nevada-Reno political science professor Dr. Robert Morin notes that NOTA "has been employed judiciously" by voters in the state. "NOTA has received a plurality of votes on only four occasions since 1976," he said. Although not examined through empirical research, "NOTA has appeared to impact campaign practices in Nevada," including its fostering of cleaner elections devoid of negative campaigning. "The Nevada experience with [NOTA] . . . indicates few arguments in opposition to this ballot option . . . [its] existence and use . . . has not resulted in disruption to the political process or to the governmental system . . . there is no movement [for its] repeal," Dr. Morin concludes.

Don Mello, the former assemblyman who successfully steered a NOTA bill through the Nevada legislature in the mid-1970's, contends it has had a positive impact on politics in the state. Mello said that NOTA acts as "a humiliation tactic" against candidates, forcing those who lose to NOTA or who barely defeat it to reconsider their practices upon entering office. But does Nevada's NOTA law go far enough? Mello's original bill would have provided for a special election when NOTA received a majority vote, but this provision was dropped prior to final passage. Thus, the full impact that NOTA may have on an abusive political system will not be felt so long as Nevada is unable to provide a binding option that requires a special election if NOTA wins.

Buoyed by the Nevada experience, support for a binding NOTA has grown across the political spectrum. The concept has supporters on the political left and right, and among Perotistas who consider themselves advocates of good government. Ralph Nader has championed NOTA as "a proper and long overdue expansion of voting choice at a time when citizens are staying away from the polls in droves because of their disgust, distrust, despair, and disillusionment with tweedledum-tweedledee politics." The Green Party, whose ticket Nader is running on for President this year, has used NOTA in its California primary. Nader contends "the NOTA ability to say NO is also the ability to say YES to better quality candidates and electoral competitions that are not so heavily decided by money and the advantages of incumbency."

Nader supports a binding NOTA. "Arguments about the cost of a second election," he maintains, "pale compared with the lack of substantive choices for quality candidates and 'politics as usual' run by cash-register politicians. Nothing is more costly than the control of nominations and elections by what Thomas Jefferson called 'the monied interests.'" He predicts

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that a binding NOTA "would pass handily in the nearly two dozen states that have the initiative and referendum" process. "Elected officials are totally frightened of 'none of the above.' It's a powerful tool. Can you believe how insulting it is to be beaten by 'none of the above?'"

California Assemblywoman Jackie Speier (Democrat-San Mateo) believes that NOTA "allows voters to use the ballot to cut down on negative campaigning," and she has introduced a binding NOTA bill in her state. "When I spoke to the public about an option of none of the above, the response was overwhelmingly favorable," she said. "While some persons expressed reservations about allowing for 'disgruntled' voters to express their views, most voters understood that (NOTA) is a good way to stop negative campaigning. I believe that negative campaigning is one of the leading contributors to voter cynicism and apathy. . . . With NOTA on the ballot, candidates who offend the public will see their campaigns, and those of their competitors, rejected at the polls."

The issue cuts across the usual ideological lines. Writing in the *Nation* in 1990, Micah L. Sifry endorsed a binding NOTA, arguing that "by threatening incumbents and contenders alike NOTA might well introduce a real choice into elections and eventually force candidates to address the issues seriously." On the political right, John Fund, *Wall Street Journal* editorialist, supports NOTA, saying "millions of Americans are tired of entering polling booths and having to choose the 'lesser of two evils.'" "NOTA isn't a complete answer to the ills of the political system," he argues. "Try campaign finance reform. But unlike term limits, it doesn't limit democracy, it expands it. And in those nightmare elections such as Louisiana's, it could give voters a real, if as yet mysterious, alternative to the likes of Edwards and Duke."

The Libertarian Party platform calls for a binding NOTA. The conservative Free Congress Foundation also supports the concept. The group's president, Paul Weyrich, said, "Many voters have become disillusioned with the political process. Some suggest voters expect too much from our leaders. But our expectations must be set high. . . . That is why voters . . . need the binding NOTA option on their ballot."

But the most significant NOTA proponent may be political scientist Kevin Phillips. The prescient Phillips foresaw, in the late 1960's, the Republican "Southern Strategy." More recently, he has accurately described the middle-class rejection of the GOP-backed international trade agreements like NAFTA and GATT. In his 1994 book *The Arrogant Capital: Washington, Wall Street, and the Frustrations of American Politics*, Phillips writes, "A NOTA line on the ballot adds another safeguard against the present excesses and unreachability of the two-party system." Elsewhere, Phillips suggests that while Washington is bogging down, grass-roots democracy in America is surging. He points to citizen support for NOTA as proof of the trend. "If some third-rate state official was up for reelection," Phillips said, "but he or she was liked so much by interest groups that major party opposition was missing or only nominal, there would still be a way for voters to say 'no'—they could force a new race with new candidates by voting for 'none of the above.'"

Ross Perot's most astute followers in the fledgling U.S. Reform Party have taken note of Phillips' analysis. While the principles of the Reform Party do not include a formal endorsement, many grass-roots activists sympathetic to the group endorse NOTA, as I have discovered firsthand in the Michigan legislature.

Political Independents have been the biggest NOTA supporters in Michigan. Last year, I introduced a bill in the Michigan House to establish a nonbinding NOTA option in local and state elections. "Many . . . would feel more confidence in our state legislature with NOTA on the ballot," wrote Loretta Adriaens, former Michigan Issues Chairwoman for United We Stand America. "(NOTA) would make it easier for average citizens to participate in government." Vicky Beeman, an ex-USWA official, wrote, "It's time we put an end to the Tweedle Dee-Tweedle Dum candidate choices. . . . The time has come to empower the voters of the state of Michigan." Another Independent wrote, "This NOTA bill is long overdue since more and more the voters are placed in a position where either option is not acceptable." Not surprisingly, a private poll of Michigan Independents found that more than 90 percent support a NOTA ballot option.

Political independents are the fastest-growing voting bloc in Michigan, but establishment Republicans have shown no interest in recruiting them with issues like NOTA. To build support for my bill, I proposed a plank to the Michigan Republican platform endorsing NOTA. The issue was tabled twice, once after a national GOP committeeman lobbied against the plank. A top Republican elective official, said to be a 1998 candidate for governor, told me privately, "I know the people and they don't want *that*." Apparently establishment Republican officials have nothing better to offer than the stale threat, repeated ad nauseam: "A vote for an Independent is a vote for Clinton." By contrast, the "post-term limits paradigm" accepts Independents as informed voters who do not respond to threats, veiled or otherwise, especially when they are made by politicians. Independents have legitimate issues, including NOTA, that must be defined as within the legitimate parameters of debate if either major party hopes to appeal to them.

In committee, I offered a compromise when it became clear my NOTA bill would die: an experiment to place NOTA on the ballot in only one district, my own. The compromise cleared the committee by the bare minimum, five votes. On the House floor, the bill was debated, then passed over for the day. Twice. Colleague Tim Walberg (Republican-Tipton), a leading state conservative, characterized NOTA as "a gimmick . . . that breaks down government and encourages people to be lazy." Another termed the bill "an abomination." Never in my brief legislative tenure had I ever encountered such hostility. Even my proposal to tax legislative pensions—which yielded a whopping three votes—did not generate the rhetoric engendered by my NOTA bill. One constituent who witnessed the debate asked, "What are they afraid of? It only applies to you!" Finally, on the third attempt, my NOTA bill passed the House, 56 to 49, again the bare minimum. But it later died in the state Senate. So once again, I am passing out adhesive NOTA ballot stickers to my constituents.

Two years ago, when I first ran against myself, I learned that constituents understand the issue much better than legislators. Among the comments I received: "I'm interested in NOTA, but only if the office remains vacant if NOTA wins." "Can a politician's pay be reduced by the percentage of votes that NOTA receives?" And, "Could NOTA be extended to Congress and the presidency?" These sentiments are proof that the people are looking for changes in our electoral system, even if the major political parties and most incumbents are not.

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The Need for Real Majority Rule

by Clyde Wilson

Igor Kopelnitsky

Democracy, Churchill is supposed to have said, is a very unsatisfactory form of government—only it's better than any other kind that has been tried. If man cannot be trusted to govern himself, Jefferson wrote, how can he be trusted to govern others, which was a definitive reply to the elitism of Hamilton (and all of Hamilton's successors). C.S. Lewis defended democracy in the same way as Jefferson, from a Christian perspective.

These sentiments reflect conclusions based upon common sense and common decency. All things considered, it is better for the community to choose those who exercise power; and once chosen, it is better for the rulers to exercise power in accordance with the sense of community than against it. But, given this sensible agreement upon proceeding, there is no need to indulge in the too common American proclivity of sanctifying the democratic process. Majority rule is a good thing, but the voice of the people is not necessarily or even usually the voice of God.

More seriously, majority rule is not as clear a concept as may at first appear, and there are many problems in its definition and application. Like making war, love, or money, and all other important human activities, making a majority, the real thing, is an art, not a simple utilitarian matter of counting papers in a box.

Of course, politicians have been busy distorting and discrediting majority rule ever since it was invented, and the meaning of "democracy" has been hopelessly compromised by bad usage in this century. Nearly every state in the world is now a "democracy," except for our masters, the Kuwaitis. Justice William Brennan believed it was "democracy" when he issued orders defined by himself, to be obeyed by all, even though they went against not only the will of the majority but against law, tradition, history, and reason as well. Far better to stick with the old American concept of republicanism, which means simply a government resting on the consent of the people.

But what do we mean by "people"? What do we mean by "majority"? Americans appear to concentrate lately much more on the choosing of our rulers—the counting of ballots—and much less on whether, once chosen, they rule in accord with the sense of the community. But what was heinous about the totalitarian dictatorships of this century was not so much the way their leaders were chosen as the unrestrained powers they exercised in office.

In fact, in our federal government, even when decisions are not made by judges and bureaucrats (as they often are), they are made by coalitions of interests, not by the sense of the majority of the people in any way our Founders would recognize. Deliberation was essential to the Founders—debate that, if it did not lead to complete agreement, educated all sides and promoted understanding and concession and a higher consensus. The intended design of the Constitution was to check and refine majorities—not to defeat them but to insure that they were real and solid and not mere temporary expressions of passions or selfish interests. And every controlling majority in the Constitution was federally weighted to give recognition to the smaller states.

This was a rather different thing, and a better rendering of majority rule than the counting of heads queued up by party whips and lobbyists. Our Congress is not a deliberative or even a legislative body—it is only a continually shifting bipartisan collection of successful pork-barrelers. True debate and deliberation disappeared long ago, when the government became chiefly a matter of dispensing favors to some at the expense

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Clyde Wilson is a professor of American history at the University of South Carolina.

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of others.

Problems in determining and implementing the sense of the majority increase progressively with the number of decisions the government makes. It is doubtful if there is any majority sense of the people in regard to most of the vast legislation, expenditure, and regulation that now comes out of Washington, nor even any public opinion at all. The more things that are decided by the central state, and the fewer by society, the less majority rule there can be.

> Can we really say today that our counting of papers in a box, or of holes in a computer card, produces majority rule in any but a superficial sense?

Setting the problem of the ongoing consent of the governed aside, even the process of electing our rulers seldom corresponds to glowing civics text descriptions of the will of the people in action. In the presidential election of 1992, there was no decision by a majority. The Establishment, including its media wing, has assiduously ignored this and acted as though it did not happen. The primary fact of the election was that it showed both ruling parties to be national minorities. Mr. Clinton won with 43 percent of the vote, with half the eligible voters not participating at all. A putatively popular incumbent President received even less.

Yet the Establishment acts as though a continuing mandate exists for the present two parties. But the next election could be even more devastating to the hope of majority rule, which is one reason the media scramble to suppress and defame all serious challengers to the status quo. Should there be a three- or four-way race in this year's election, it is conceivable that a President could be elected by a 35 percent plurality if it were well placed in California and a few other large states.

The problem is not with the Electoral College—that it is indirect and gives added weight to the smaller states and is therefore undemocratic. These aspects are completely in keeping with the design of the Constitution. The problem is the gimmicks which politicians have rigged into the practice by law and custom. Why, when we have popular vote, should all the electoral votes of a state go to a candidate who won by 51 percent (or by 35 percent in a three-way field)? Not because this is a better form of democracy, but because it makes it easier for politicians to win elections. (It also gives more power to party members in states that are less loyal to the party than in those that are loyal.) This is *not* in keeping with the spirit of the Constitution.

How many Americans think that the Democrats and Republicans are in the Constitution? In fact, the Constitution pervasively and deliberately seeks to minimize the power of political parties. The presidential electors were supposed to be outstanding citizens who gathered in their state capitals to deliberate and make a choice—not the obscure party hacks they are now. The electors could be chosen in any way the state determined—by the legislature or by the state's (not federal) franchise, and in the latter case either by a general ticket or by districts.

Such was the practice in the beginning. Nor did political party conventions, that is, conclaves of professional politicians and would-be professional politicians, determine who the candidates were to be. But now the party conventions, themselves rigged with all sorts of tricks to distort majority rule, along with the media, decide the candidates.

Under the Constitution, if there was no majority in the Electoral College, then the election would be decided by the House of Representatives among the top contenders—with each state having one vote. It was a sensible way to evolve a majority, a firmer and more federal consensus. It was not expected that all the members of the House would be party hacks. In the beginning they were not.

Our present party system did not begin to take hold until the 1830's, and then chiefly in states like New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio where both state and federal patronage were sizable, and organizations could be built and maintained on spoils. Representation elsewhere, in Massachusetts and South Carolina, for instance, continued to be based upon principle rather than organization. In the early days of the government, a federal representative could know and be known by nearly every substantial citizen in his district. Moreover, he had to meet the people face to face and debate his potential opponents. He was the representative of his people, who knew his character, and not the creature of party.

There remained many relatively independent members of Congress right down to the War Between the States. In fact, elections, the counting of heads, were relatively unimportant. Once the two or three candidates had debated around the district, it was pretty clear who was the choice, and the others often withdrew before the count. Serving in Congress was not a money-making proposition or a long-term career.

It was also true that many congressional districts, and this was also true of state legislative districts, through continuity over time, had developed characters of their own, even if they did not always strictly reflect "one man, one vote." Artificial creations like congressional districts and counties acquired identities for those who lived there, so that being the representative of "the Old Ninth" carried with it a strong if intangible identification with a particular known history, geography, and collection of communities.

The Supreme Court's "one man, one vote" decisions have destroyed all of this. Even though state constitutions, presumably the voice of the people, chose to distribute legislative power in part by considerations other than numbers, in the interest of better representation, the voice of the people meant nothing compared to the Justices' notions of equality. So today we have legislative districts devised by computer that divide not only counties but neighborhoods, which snake up and down 100-foot corridors of superhighways, and change every few years. These changes have hardly been remarked upon, but they have hopelessly distorted the relationship between representatives and their constituents and compromised the will of the majority.

Moreover, who are the people forming the majority? When I last went to renew my driving license, in a peaceful suburb in

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conservative South Carolina, the motor vehicle employees were busy (under federal mandate) registering to vote a considerable number of Asians and Hispanics—whether citizens or not, who knows?

It was not thus at the founding of the American Republic. George Washington and John Adams received the suffrages of their fellow citizens in much different fashion. Most elections were indirect except those for the representative bodies; these, not the executive and judicial, had most of the power, and the number of decisions made by the public sector at any level was small. Voting was viva voce. The justices of the peace spread a table under the trees by the courthouse and the citizen came and declared his choice in front of the whole public (before or after to be feted with rum and barbecue by the candidates' friends). It was a manly act of citizenship, allied to serving in the militia or on a jury. It was limited to those who had achieved responsible ownership of productive private property.

Of course, since human nature was present in those days, there was demagoguery and clandestine manipulation, but some eras and societies are more honorable than others. When the election, which often took several days, was over, there was a general public knowledge of the sense of the community. The utilitarian counting of heads with which we are now so obsessed was an afterthought.

Can we really say today that our counting of papers in a box, or of holes in a computer card, produces majority rule in any but a superficial sense? Do we really think, when such vast amounts of power, wealth, and vanity are at stake, that politicians, who control the machinery and the ground rules of the elections, always, or even usually, behave honestly?

My enlightenment came in 1968 when I volunteered as a poll watcher for the Wallace campaign in a liberal college town in the South. I discovered, as did the Republican watcher, that the Democratic precinct manager, an oldtime leftist of local notoriety, was giving two ballots to the black voters, and instructing them on how to fill them out. When confronted, she avowed unashamedly that she was making amends for their previous disfranchisement, which was only fair. We reported this to the Republican county committee, and were ready to swear affidavits. We were told later that the FBI was notified. Nothing further was ever heard. Nixon carried the state by a plurality over Wallace. It was not in the interest of Republican politicians to upset the system. I had my youthful eyes opened to the difference between politics and democracy.

Does anyone really believe that John F. Kennedy defeated Nixon fair and square in 1960? In an incredibly close election divided by less than one percentage point and with evidence of fraud in several key states? Nixon made the "statesmanlike" decision not to protest and upset the apple cart. A real democratic statesman would have insisted that the true will of the people be determined, whatever the consequences to the convenient party games. The consequences for American society were immense—the deification of Kennedy by the media, his martyrdom, and the implementation of social revolution by Johnson on the emotions produced by that martyrdom. Yet in what sense can Kennedy's election be said to represent the unqualified will of the people?

It is absurd to congratulate ourselves on our right to go to the polls and choose between Tweedledee and Tweedledum when in fact our government, though it is never mentioned in polite circles, is in many aspects a plutocracy. We plain folk are overshadowed by accumulations of wealth that make the difference in property between George Washington and a tenant farmer insignificant. Decisions are made more often than anyone likes to admit by the wielders of great capital. It is a measure of real power when one can exercise it without even being noticed. How often behind some foreign policy decision we find lurking the interests of the Rockefellers and other big money manipulators. One does not have to be a conspiratorialist to see the distortion of majority rule this represents.

How else to explain a buffoon like Nelson Rockefeller becoming governor of a powerful state, Vice President (by appointment), and a perennial presidential candidate without any trace of intellectual or moral qualification? Somewhere Carroll Quigley, President Clinton's mentor and an admiring historian of our Establishment, records an anecdote of Averell Harriman, the multimillionaire Democratic mover and shaker. When he first heard of Jimmy Carter, Harriman, who was temporarily out of the loop, remarked in a moment of senescent candor: "He can't be President. I don't even know him." As Orwell remarked long ago, some animals are more equal than others.

History begins about 1960 for our media and politicians. They know no more of the spirit and little more of the letter of early American history and government than I do of the Han dynasty. The complications that may well arise in the 1996 presidential election, if there is no majority, could become a virtue. They could invoke further deliberation and compromise and the addressing of neglected issues. They won't, because we will see the media and the two parties coalescing to put down challenges to their hegemony.

In a Distant Field

by Emanuel di Pasquale

The ocean is almost still—
like grass let grown
indifferent
over an old grave
leaning lightly
to a light wind.

There is no warm line
of current that leads
to a river, and
I see no tree
no bush
no fallen leaf—
only the hard paws
of a wild dog.

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The 1824 election saw a crisis that may have meaning for ours soon to come. With the Virginia dynasty at an end, there were now four presidential candidates, and the Electoral College had registered no majority. The politicians' machinations then kicked into gear—Henry Clay on behalf of John Quincy Adams, Martin Van Buren and various other sleazy operators for General Jackson, and many others.

In the House, 13 states were needed to elect a President. Twelve, after much wheeling and dealing, were for Adams, including some which had favored Jackson, who had the largest plurality, in the canvass. The New York delegation, thanks to Van Buren, was equally divided, with one undecided. The undecided was Stephen Van Rensselaer, a wealthy fool of the Nelson Rockefeller type who had originally supported Crawford, now out of the running.

Besieged by Adams and Jackson advocates, the old man prayed while the count was being taken. When he opened his eyes it was revealed to him that Adams should be President—and so he was. There followed one of the most beleaguered and divisive administrations in American history, which led to the rapid formation of competing political parties—parties competing less on principles than on personalities, spoils, and organization. Thus was set the basic text of American political discourse, the gift of Van Buren to the democratic process: the politician who seeks the middle, is all things to all men, pretends that divisive issues do not exist, and gives a plausible but noncommittal answer to every question.

The Lincoln crisis gives us another historical lesson. Though a clear winner in 1860 in the Electoral College, Lincoln had slightly less than 40 percent of the popular vote, more narrowly concentrated than in any election before or since. Clearly a majority of the American people never favored his hardline policies, which led to war and social revolution. We ought to give some thought to exactly what is meant by government of, by, and for the people.

In fact, glancing back over American history, very few of the largest and most decisive acts have been taken by means of real majority rule. How often has the peace candidate inaugurated war shortly after his election, prior to rather than as a consequence of majority consensus? And no Southerner can forget Reconstruction, with the qualified barred from the polling places, the unqualified marshaled to vote, dishonest officials routinely certifying fraudulent election returns, and the presence of military intimidation. Indeed, it is clear that Samuel J. Tilden was elected President in 1876 and not Rutherford B. Hayes, who was sworn in nonetheless.

In 1824, 1844, 1848, 1856, 1860, 1876, 1880, 1884, 1888, 1892, 1912, 1916, 1948, 1960, 1968, and 1992, Presidents were elected without a majority, and in 1836, 1852, 1976, and 1980, the majority was less than one percent. After a number of these narrow elections, there followed great and irrevocable decisions. We need to find ways of determining firmer and truer majorities and mandates—of taking the real sense of the people rather than abiding by the deceitful choices offered by party and media hacks.

One need is to derail the present party system and force a more honest deliberation of public issues. Possibly the American people are already moving in that direction. Even more important is the need to devolve decision-making back to places where the will of the people can really be known and effected.

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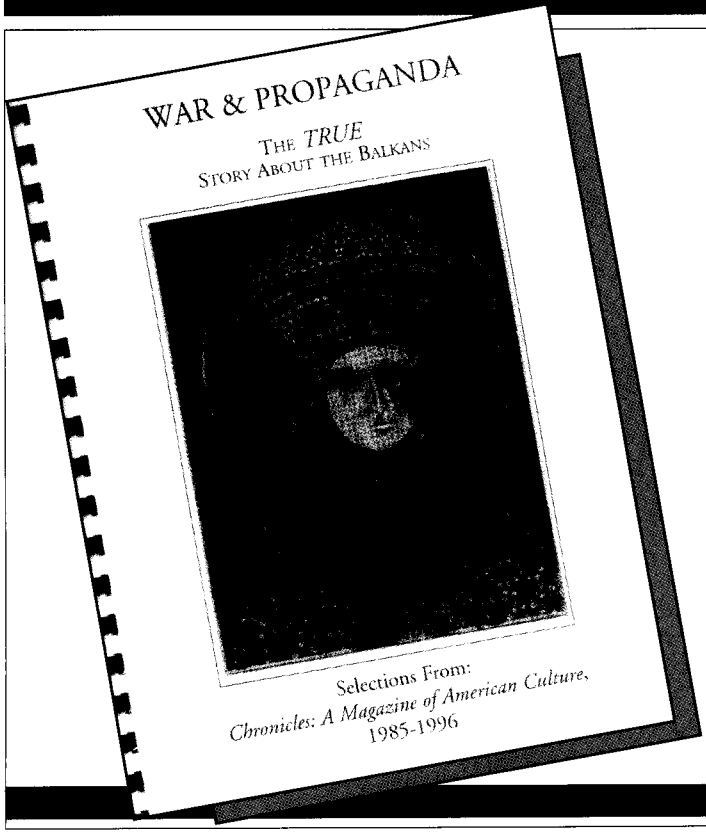

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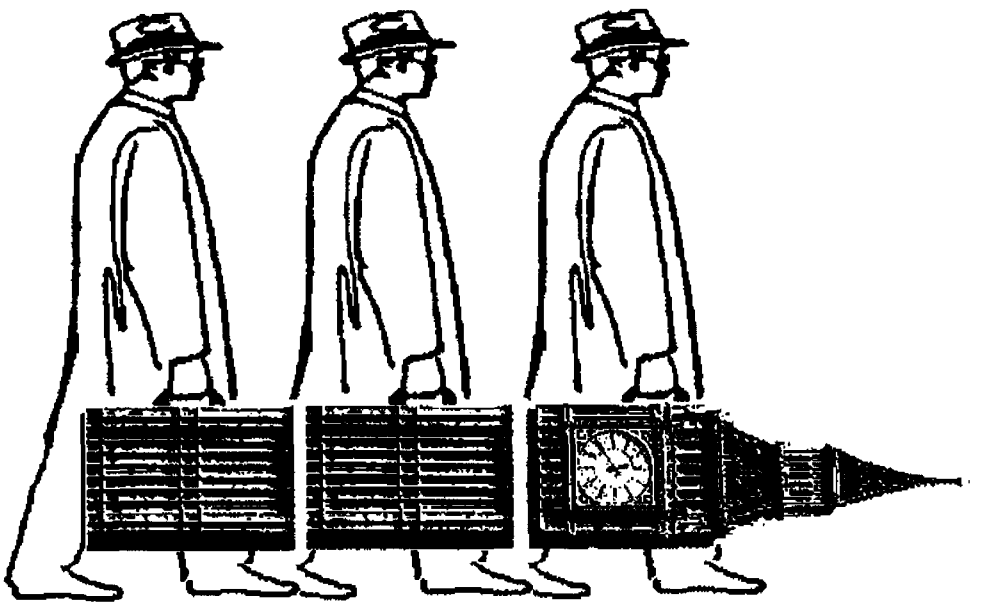
British and American Elections

A Comparative Look

by Jeremy Black



Igor Kopelnitsky

In June 1996, the funding of British politics came to front-page prominence with a controversy over the funding of political opposition to greater integration within the European Union. This opposition, organized by Bill Cash, a backbench (i.e., nonoffice-holding) Tory MP, was offered funds by Sir James Goldsmith, a very wealthy Anglo-French entrepreneur mostly resident outside Britain. This at once created controversy, because Goldsmith, anti-big government, pro-protectionism, and very opposed to European integration, had recently launched a Referendum Party, which insists on a referendum on the issue of integration. As Goldsmith had announced that his candidates would fight all MPs who were unwilling to support such a referendum, Cash was therefore bitterly criticized within the Tory Party for taking money from a politician opposed to many Tories. The controversy led him to decline the donation, whereupon it was replaced by Mrs. Thatcher, from the funds of the Thatcher Foundation, a donation that created fresh controversy.

The entire episode revealed aspects of the Americanization of British politics. Goldsmith is a Perot figure, willing to use his great wealth to try to break the mold of two-party politics. The referendum also indicates the rise of single-issue politics, which, while not unknown in British politics, has tended to be subsumed by the coalition nature of British political parties.

Yet, despite these similarities, there are also major differences between the funding of politics on both sides of the Atlantic. First, British politics is far cheaper, for three reasons: Britain is a much smaller country, and it is therefore easier to communicate a political message on a national scale; the campaigning season in Britain is far shorter; and third, public expectations play a major role. The public does not like extended campaigns, and is hostile toward the notion that elections can be bought. There is considerably more unease, indeed opposition, toward expenditure on politics in Britain than there is in the United States. Talk of campaign chests or donations excites disquiet, if not obloquy, and both major political parties are sensitive on the issue. The Labour Party seeks to refute claims that it is in the pockets of the trade unions, the Conservatives that they rely on business donations.

A second major difference involves the party context. British political parties play a greater role than their American counterparts, and they are certainly crucial in funding and expenditure. Individual candidates play a much smaller role in both than in America. This, again, is a consequence of the smaller size of the country and the less complex nature of its politics.

Public culture plays a role as well. Television channels are obliged to air party political broadcasts free, and to allocate the time available in relation to the political support of the individual parties. The slots are therefore dominated by Labour and the Tories. However, there is also time for minority parties that have virtually no funds, including those representing environmentalist, fascist, and nationalist parties; thus both the Welsh and the Scottish nationalist parties gain a British voice, or rather, attention, at that level. Free political broadcasts on television, allocated in accordance with electoral appeal, reflect a political culture that is somewhat different from that of the United States. The role of television advertising is also affected

Jeremy Black is a professor of history at the University of Durham, England.

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by the fact that two of the four major British channels, BBC1 and BBC2, do not carry any advertising. Thus the party political broadcasts are treated not as advertisements, but as public interest items. This status affects their content. In contrast to political advertisements on American television, their British counterparts are concerned to praise, not to attack. However, newspaper advertisements are apt to be more aggressive.

Aside from party political broadcasts, candidates are also allowed to distribute one leaflet to every elector in their constituency post-free. Again, therefore, there is a dimension to this electioneering, and its funding, that relates to electoral politics as a public function.

The account hitherto has been somewhat static, but the very essence of modern politics is its dynamism. It is not simply that issues change. Rather, the very electorate is dynamic. Each year there are many new voters, but in addition, the degree of geographical and social mobility is such that voters "reinvent" themselves politically in changing their identity.

This mobility affects the strength of local political structures and thus their ability to raise funds. In fundraising terms, constituency branches are weaker than ever before. Party membership fell badly in the 1980's and early 90's: first the Labour Party and then the Tories. This, more generally, is an aspect of the decline of voluntarism in British society since the 1950's. Another problem for local fundraising stems from the decline of the local ownership of businesses. Increasingly, local businesses have been bought out by national, or indeed international, combinations, thus reducing the number of local concerns able and willing to fund political parties. Shifts in business ownership have also affected donations: there are fewer privately owned companies where an individual or family can decide to donate funds. Instead, there are more companies that are quoted on the stock market, and in the mid-1990's such companies, or rather their stockholders, have become more sensitive about political donations.

If the dynamism of British society has really affected classic sources of Tory funding, Labour has also been badly affected by the decline in the trade union movement. The expansion in the "middle class" in the 1980's and the growth of white collar at the expense of blue collar jobs, and of part-time and female at the expense of full-time and male employment, has led to this decline, which has lessened the political contributions payable to Labour. Furthermore, trade unions no longer have the right to force members to subscribe to the unions' political contributions as part of their membership.

Another dynamic aspect is the European dimension. There are now elections to the European Parliament in Strasbourg as well as to the Westminster Parliament. Fought on different constituencies and at different times, these elections place new burdens on party finances, but also lead to a new timetable and scale of politics that requires popular and institutional responses. It is as if the United States suddenly added a new level of transnational elections.

More generally, the political world in Britain is affected by a decline in traditional assumptions and practices. This is part of a more general collapse in deference that affected Britain since the 1960's, creating what in effect is a new society. This new society has traditional political institutions, but a new more volatile, and secular, political culture; and reaching out to win and retain support is more difficult than was the case with the political practices of the 1950's. Politics is also affected by the new consumerism and by the rise of visual means of conveying ideas and eliciting responses. The emphasis is on politics as a consumed product, and this is expensive. The new political world thus creates pressures for new funding solutions. One is to raise more money by traditional methods, another to supplement these by new consumer-oriented products, for example credit cards that pay a percentage to a nominated political party.

The problem of mass politics of the 1990's has led to increased pressure for the public funding of political parties. This pressure has almost entirely come from Labour and Liberal, rather than Tory, sympathies. It is linked to the dissatisfaction with existing practices and call for constitutional reform that have played such a major role in left-wing political discussion in the 1990's. The pressure is also linked to suspicion of private capital and the links between financiers and politics. In particular, there was criticism that the Tories took money from foreign businessmen.

Thus, on the issue of public funding, the left-wing agenda, supposedly driven into retreat in the 1980's, is on the return. It is advanced with all the naiveté that characterizes such arguments. For example, such public funding to be effective would be very expensive. Taxpayers would be expected to underwrite politicians yet again. In addition, there is the question of the institutionalization of political activity that such public funding would entail. This is a serious issue, and any naive British confidence in the superiority of British political funding should fade in response to the widespread willingness to advance the issue. c

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Don't Show Me Yours and I Won't Show You Mine

by Katherine McAlpine

Publishing seasons bring their little oddities—
one year, reincarnation's all the rage,
then athletes battling AIDS are hot commodities
or tacky actors hog the printed page.

Lately it's lousy childhoods: "Look how Mama's
scarred me by her imperfect motherhood,
Teacher's harsh words inflicted lifelong traumas,
and Daddy's spankings screwed me up for good.

See how they drove me into deep depressions,
bulimia, bad marriages." Oh please,
authors, spare us more piteous confessions,
your hoarded hurts, your whole damn family's

dreary dysfunctions. My heart fails to break.
We're grownups now. Grow up, for goodness sake.

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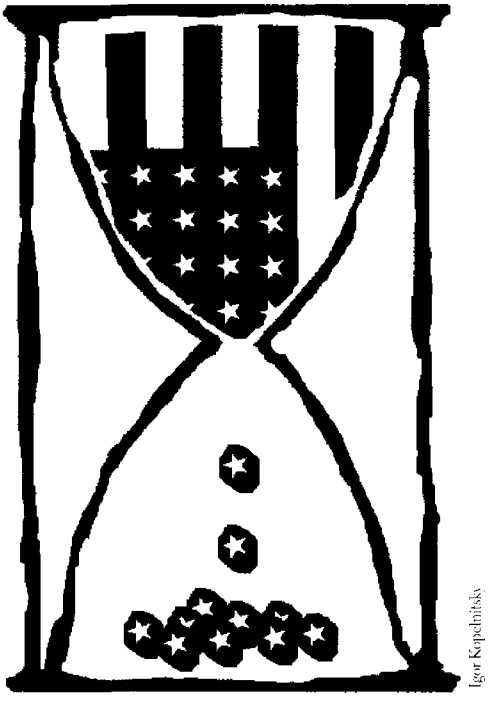
The Ten Commandments of Community

by Richard D. Lamm



Igor Kapchitski

We are sailing into a new world of public policy—a world as strange and new as Columbus discovered. It is a world where infinite government demands have run straight into finite resources. It is an America made up increasingly of diverse people. At current immigration patterns, by 2040, there will not be a dominant ethnic group in America. We will all be minorities. We are the only country in history that ever deliberately changed its ethnic makeup, and history has few examples of "diversity" creating a stable society.

America is an aging society whose wealth is not accumulating at historic rates. Most of our institutional memories and political culture come out of the 1950's and 1960's, when America was largely European in makeup and was doubling its per capita wealth every 30 to 40 years. Government had a substantial yearly growth dividend it could spend. Now, a much more diverse America is the worst country in the industrialized world at creating wealth (it now takes approximately 130 years to double our per capita wealth). We go into debt to maintain current levels of government. Being in government today is like sleeping with a blanket that is too short: we do not have the resources to cover all our current promises. Compounding the problem is the growing economic disparity, with a small percent at the top of the economic ladder creating most of the new wealth.

We already live in a time of unprecedented tension between the races, sexes—even generations and religions. Because a more crowded, more diverse, and less wealthy country must give serious thought to what "social glue" is necessary to hold it together, it is imperative for us to understand what a "community" is and how it is formed and reinforced. As Marcel Proust has said, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands, but in seeing with new eyes."

Let us look with "new eyes" at community. A community is much more than a place on a map. It is a state of mind, a shared vision, a common fate that is forged by dedication, work, tolerance, and love. The community passed on to us by our forefathers will not inevitably be passed on to our children, for community is not a guarantee but a continuing challenge.

The results of not building a community are evident everywhere, in Bosnia, Chechnya, Sri Lanka, Quebec, and Rwanda. What is going on today in Azerbaijan and Bosnia is not a failure of communism; it is failure of community. The Serbs, Slovenians, Croats, and Bosnians were killing each other long before Marx was born. Bosnia, in fact, traumatized as it is, is far less diverse than the United States, but we formed a community (*E Pluribus Unum*) and Bosnia did not.

In light of our new social and economic realities, therefore, we must reconsider those elements that build community and those that tend to pull community apart, such as race, religion, and ethnicity. Melting pots that do not melt become pressure cookers, and diversity carried too far is dangerously divisive.

Building better communities, then, should be highly important public policy and critical to our public and private futures. I should thus like to offer "Ten Commandments of Community"—ten building blocks which are imperative as we try to re-

Richard D. Lamm, governor of Colorado from 1975 to 1987, is director of the Center for Public Policy and Contemporary Issues at the University of Denver. He was a Reform Party candidate for the presidency of the United States.

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new and expand our sense of community.

Commandment I: The future is not something we inherit, but something we create. Too many Americans believe that God is an American who will watch over us no matter how hedonistic, selfish, myopic, or inefficient we become. This is a dangerous hubris. No great nation in history has ever withstood the ravages of time. Toynbee warned us that all great nations rise and fall, and that the "autopsy of history is that all great nations commit suicide." Because God will not automatically save America, with God's help, we must save ourselves.

There is an Amazon legend about a priest speaking with God about heaven and hell. "I will show you hell," said God. They went into a room which had a delicious beef stew on the table, around which sat people who looked desperately famished. They held spoons with long handles which reached into the pot, but because the spoons were too long, they could not get the stew into their mouths. Their suffering was terrible. "Now, I will show you heaven," said God. They then went into an identical room with the same savory stew on the table, around which sat people with identical spoons and handles, but they were well nourished and joyous. The priest was baffled until God said, "Quite simply, you see, these people have learned to feed each other."

We can create chaos, as in Bosnia, or we can create community. The decision is up to us.

Commandment II: A great community needs great leaders *and* great citizens. How do we expect to build community when 30 percent of our births (67 percent of black births) are illegitimate, and when we know that illegitimacy is a "leading indicator" of almost every social pathology (e.g., juvenile delinquency, crime, spousal abuse, drug abuse, etc.)? How do we hold the urban centers of this nation together when 70 percent of the students in public school come from families that qualify for the "free lunch" program and the wealthy live in "gated communities"? What should we expect in the 21st century after my generation has witnessed a 560 percent increase in violent crime, a 419 percent increase in illegitimate births, a 400 percent increase in divorce rates, a 300 percent increase in children living in single-parent homes, and a drop of 80 points in SAT scores?

Commandment III: A community must have economic stability. Economic instability preceded Lenin's Russia, Mussolini's Italy, and Hitler's Germany. My generation has lied about our country's deficit by borrowing from various federal trust funds, masked the true extent of our debt, and run up a staggering trade deficit. Look at the figures: the federal debt that we admit to has been growing steadily both in actual numbers and as a percentage of our GDP. When I was elected to my second term as governor of Colorado in 1979, the federal debt was $1 trillion and the GDP $3 trillion. When I left office in 1987, the federal debt was $2 trillion and the GDP $4 trillion. Today, the federal debt is $5 trillion and the GDP $7 trillion. This is bad enough, but when the "unfunded" liabilities for programs that we have enjoyed (like military pensions, federal civil service retirement, and Social Security) are added into the mix, the actual costs that our children and great grandchildren will have to pay are between $14 and $17 trillion, if not more. The trade deficit gives people outside the United States a claim on our assets. It is essentially an IOU for goods we imported in excess of those we exported.

Never has a generation of Americans so prespent our children's money and mortgaged their future. We are the most fiscally irresponsible generation in our nation's history, and to many thoughtful people, there will come a day of reckoning for our irresponsible actions.

Commandment IV: A community must generate tolerance and yet set limits on that tolerance. Tolerance is a word easy to say—hard to apply. But what a community should and should not tolerate often depends on context. It is your right to read your Bible, your Koran, your Torah, but it is not your right to force these readings on others. We can tolerate almost any idea, and the community should be alive with argument. What should be taught in public schools is a thornier issue. We are entitled to believe in creationism, for example, but are we entitled to teach it as fact in the public schools? I suggest not.

The standards for teaching and tolerance are not coterminous. It may be that you deeply believe that it is the trees moving that makes the wind. This is your prerogative, but you cannot teach it to my kids in public institutions. Science and rational thought have put to rest certain arguments, and knowledge must move forward if we are to survive in a competitive world. We can tolerate many private beliefs but should stand strong against institutionalizing nonscience and falsehood into our school system.

Commandment V: A community can be a Joseph's coat of many colors and creeds, but it must have more things in common than differences. "Diversity" is a word sweeping America and, in particular, our college campuses. I am suspicious of the "eulogization" of that word. I recently traveled around the world and in no place, with the possible exception of Hawaii, did I see "diversity" working. The people of the world's most diverse regions are mostly engaged in hating and killing one another. A peaceful and stable society built on "diversity" is much harder to achieve than most Americans acknowledge, and I am sobered by how much unity it takes. Dorf's *World History* tell us that "the Greeks believed that they belonged to the same race; they possessed a common language and literature, and they worshipped the same gods. All Greece took part in the Olympic games in honor of Zeus, and all Greeks venerated the shrine of Apollo at Delphi. A common enemy, Persia, threatened their liberty. Yet all of these bonds together were not strong enough to overcome two factors . . . local patriotism and geographical conditions which nurtured political divisions."

The *Los Angeles Times*, whose market area is now a seething land of ethnic tensions, warns, "If ethnicity begins to replace citizenship as the basis of statehood, chaos would ensue." But this is exactly the situation today. Hispanic students demand a separate education, at which the Mexican, not American, flag is flown. There is more talk of "reclaiming" the Southwest for Mexico than there is of allegiance to America. Is this just a passing phase? The history of multiple cultures living together without assimilation is not encouraging. The United States runs the very great risk of creating a "Hispanic Quebec" if we do not develop and apply the right social ties. As Benjamin Schwarz said recently in the *Atlantic Monthly*, "The apparent success of our own multi-ethnic and multicultural experiment might have been achieved not by tolerance but by hegemony.

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Without the dominance that once dictated ethnocentrically, and what it meant to be an American, we are left with only tolerance and pluralism to hold us together."

This is not enough. We must be more than a diverse people living in the same place and sharing only a standard of living. In short, "diversity" is only an asset if it is secondary to unity. The emphasis must be on the *unum* not the *pluribus*. We should respect diversity, but we should celebrate unity.

Commandment VI: A community cares about its future and builds for that future. Dietrich Bonhoeffer observed during his fight against Hitler that "the ultimate question for a responsible man is . . . how the coming generation will live." As explained above, my generation has not been good trustees for America. We have not met the most basic of history's tests: instead of leaving our children a sustainable society, we have left them fiscal time bombs. We have not maintained strong, vigorous, and sustainable institutions.

As already detailed, we have hung an albatross of debt around the necks of our children. Social Security, Medicare, military pensions, federal civil service pensions, state and local pensions—all these and more are chain letters to the future. Medicare is one recession away from bankruptcy. The average person retiring today will receive from Social Security three or four times as much money as he paid into the system, while our children will be lucky to even get their contributions back. Programs that worked and were good social policy when we had a society with many children and when people died in their 60's and 70's does not make economic sense in a society which has fewer children with a less productive economy and whose citizens live well into their 80's.

The elderly make up 13 percent of America, and they receive 61 percent of federal social spending, despite the fact that the elderly are no longer disproportionately poor. It is political power, not social justice, which sets priorities, and money desperately needed to prepare the next generation is being transferred to the last generation whether they need it or not. Money desperately needed by poor children in St. Paul is transferred instead to wealthy retirees in St. Petersburg.

The status of a community at any given time is like starlight. What you see is, to a large degree, not what *is* but what *was*. Just as the star you see is light which left the star years before, so also community is the result of a previous generation saving, investing, educating, and building. Communities are the result of generations of caring.

In all cultures, in all nations, and in all religions, there is a universal theme against profligacy, one urging justice for future generations. A community cares about posterity. An old Middle East proverb observes, "The beginning of wisdom comes when a person plants a tree, the shade under which he knows he will never sit." Alas, my generation has cut down many of the shade trees we inherited.

Commandment VII: A community needs a shared culture and shared language. John Gardner, former Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, has said:

> If the community is lucky, and fewer and fewer are, it will have a shared history and tradition. It will have its "story," its legends and heroes, and will retell that story often. It will have symbols of group identity—a name, a flag, a location, songs, and stories . . . which it will use to heighten its members' sense of belonging. . . . To maintain the sense of belonging and the dedication and commitment so essential to community life, members need inspiring reminders of shared goals and values.

I am convinced that one of the "shared values" we must have is a shared language. It is a blessing for an individual to be bilingual—it is a curse for a society to be bilingual.

The United States, in my opinion, is at a crossroads. It must move toward either greater integration or greater fragmentation. It will either have to do a better job of assimilating its peoples or witness increasing alienation and balkanization. We found in the 1950's that "separate was inherently unequal," but it is also inherently divisive.

Commandment VIII: A great community is one that has developed a great culture. Why do certain people succeed in disproportionate numbers and others fail? The answer, I believe, is culture.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan says that "the central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of a society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself." The most economically successful people in America today are in fact minorities who have been discriminated against. Regarding family income, the top earners in America are Japanese, Chinese, Jews, and Koreans. Why? I believe it is because they come from cultures which promote education, delayed gratification, ambition, and hard work, and other traits that are most often equated with success.

Commandment IX: Ask not what your community can do for you but what you can do for your community. I believe a quality community is one which balances rights and privileges with duties and responsibilities. No society can live on rights and privileges alone, as we have tried to do for too long. Our community and our nation now need something in return.

A free republic demands a far higher degree of virtue than any earlier society. It demands a profound sense of personal responsibility, a willingness to govern one's own passions, a capacity of initiative and self-reliance, a taste for personal independence, and a sustained spirit of civic cooperation. Saul Bellow said it well, that "America is as threatened by an excess of liberty as Russia was by the absence of liberty." Those are important words. An 18th-century philosopher put it another way: "Freedom is the luxury of self-discipline." "America, the Beautiful" mirrors this same thought: "Confirm thy soul in self-control by liberty and law."

A breakdown in community because of a lack of cooperation, self-control, and common sense was recently witnessed in South Carolina, where the state's Supreme Court upheld Beaufort City's ordinance banning excessive noise. The ordinance was challenged by street preachers who asserted a right to shout as loudly as possible for a sustained period regardless of the effects on pedestrians, the area's businesses, and the community well-being. Despite three attempts by the city to compromise, the street preachers refused to limit either their volume or the hours they engaged in shouting. In response, the City Council passed an ordinance prohibiting such "speech." Under the ordinance, dozens of street preachers were arrested as the ministers poured into town preaching for hours on end. One preacher was measured at 89 decibels—the sound equivalent of a

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symphony orchestra.

The street preachers argued that their First Amendment rights overrode the interest of the community, and that street preachers could not judge what volume was too high under the dictates of the ordinance. The City Council replied that "the vitality of a nation's cities and towns depends upon the ability of local government to enact reasonable laws which promote the quality of life of the community." One owner of a downtown shop testified that it was impossible to carry on a conversation and that customers often fled to escape the noise. City officials feared that economic viability of the restored downtown area was at stake. Fortunately, the South Carolina Supreme Court deemed the ordinance constitutional.

Recently, my wife and I spent a fall in San Francisco. We saw the most aggressive begging we had ever encountered. One man told us that if we did not give him a donation, he would rob us next time. A clampdown on aggressive begging is underway in San Francisco, as well as in many other cities. The issue is not homelessness, as social activists like to claim; it is community, and the desire to stave off urban decline.

In both Chicago and St. Louis, groups of welfare mothers have tried to strengthen their local communities by cleaning up their housing projects. They passed tenant rules which forbade carrying guns or selling drugs within the projects. The ACLU predictably sued, arguing that the rules, which required searching each person upon entry, infringed on people's rights. The courts, however, upheld the women's actions, pointing out that the tenants could indeed set standards and evict people who violate those standards set by and for the community.

In short, tolerance in moderation is a safety net, but unlimited tolerance breeds chaos and crime, the very opposite of community. Adam Smith's model of the "invisible hand"—with every person pursuing his own selfish interest—may produce a prosperous economy, but it does not build a community. It leaves us a collection of disparate, autonomous, and unconnected individuals.

Commandment X: A community needs government it can trust. Waco, Whitewater, Ruby Ridge, and the widespread aversion to the special interest money that plays too large a role in the election and reelection of politicians and in the laws they make—all of these show that we are coming perilously close to a complete breakdown of faith in our federal government. Poll after poll shows that confidence in government and politics are at an all-time low. Some distrust of government is healthy, but too much distrust leads to anarchy. We must restore some level of confidence in the problem-solving machinery of society.

The bottom line is this. We can no longer take "community" for granted in the United States. There is too much tension, too much misunderstanding, too many separate tribes yelling at each other. It is a dangerous situation, and if our country and culture are to survive and prosper, we must first salvage that elusive concept of community.

A Woman I Know

by Katherine McAlpine

"I'm bored with being
a wife and mother."
Moved out on hubby,
in with a lover.

Seventeen years
shrugged off. "Of course
he better not plan
on a cheap divorce."

And the kids? I ask.
It seems they'd rather
(unsurprisingly)
live with Father.

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Myths and Mistakes

by Paul Gottfried

"What all the wise men promised has not happened, and what all the damned fools said would happen has come to pass."

—Lord Melbourne

The Immigration Mystique: America's False Conscience
by Chilton Williamson, Jr.
New York: Basic Books;
202 pp., $23.00

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In this highly informative book, Chilton Williamson, Jr., walks us through the tortuous history of American immigration policy. Along the way he draws attention to critical milestones, such as the 1924 Naturalization Act and the congressional legislation since 1965 bearing on immigration and nationality. Williamson relates these and other legislative attempts to deal with immigration to a social and economic context. But even more importantly, he looks at the cultural and emotional circumstances surrounding "immigration reforms." This historical thinking is entirely justified. Not all immigration legislation has followed economic logic in the manner of the Naturalization Act of 1924. When in the early 1920's the United States had enough unskilled labor and many feared the socially disruptive effects of further lower-class immigration, particularly on radicalized American workers, Congress moved to reduce the immigration rates. In 1965, when Congress supported expanded immigration from what turned out to be the Third World, it clearly was not following any general economic interest. It may have been supplying some businessmen with cheap labor, but this came at the expense of the minorities and immigrants already here, and increased immigration raised the cost for social services, which fell on the population as a whole. The new immigration policy was also

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justified in terms of enhancing American diversity, but Williamson properly asks why this should be considered particularly desirable. By the mid-60's, the United States was already an ethnically diverse nation facing racial strife and escalating social violence. Though the country had problems, a lack of diversity was not one of them.

Williamson maintains that one can only understand the 1965 act by looking at how clergymen, journalists, and politicians were reconstructing the American self-image. Americans were being burdened with a false guilty conscience about not having practiced their heritage of caring globalism, a heritage that was mostly fictitious and had nothing to do with the way immigration had been viewed in the past. What had been a strictly utilitarian means for settling a vast frontier land and providing infant industries with workers was now turned into an ideology, one that prohibited national distinctions or democratically agreed on limits to further demographic change. Williamson notes that popular acceptance of the 1965 act was shaped by the "potent myth" of redemption being given to political sinners. No matter where it led and how deceitfully it was presented, Americans had to stick by that commitment to openness. It was depicted as the final tribute to a slain President, John F. Kennedy, who had called for a repeal of the 1924 Naturalization Act in his ghosted book *A Nation of Immigrants*. Kennedy's brothers, Robert and Edward, had kept this fact before the public in pressing for a new immigration law. Besides, it was the recognized "gods of the [civil rights] pantheon" who became the tutelary spirits for a future borderless America. Religious and political leaders, Williamson shows, seized on the parallel between pulling down racial barriers at home and throwing open America's borders. Unlike other critics of immigration, Williamson does not make the questionable assertion that increased immigration was simply a trick foisted on the unsuspecting. He offers a *histoire de mentalité* that sets the entire issue in perspective.

One outstanding merit of his book is the graceful style in which it approaches a controversial topic. First and foremost a man of letters, Williamson does not seem concerned about winning legislative battles or devastating political opponents. Despite his stated intent, at least in conversation, to take no prisoners, his book is unfailingly courteous even toward those with whom he sharply disagrees. He points out that honest mistakes were committed by some legislators who underestimated the effects and size of increased immigration. He also takes pains to allow the other side to

Paul Gottfried is a professor of humanities at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania.

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speak for itself; and while he places opposing views and clumsy predictions against the historical record, he desists from personal judgments.

All of this must be kept in mind as one considers the hysterical responses to Williamson's book found in the mainstream press, and most particularly in the *Wall Street Journal*. In a July 26 review in the *Journal* by a John J. Miller, Williamson is accused of a surly xenophobia that is nowhere to be seen in his text. Miller misrepresents the testimony that Williamson cites concerning the difficulty of absorbing Irish and German immigrants in the early 19th century. The citations given and the observations made do not prove that Williamson hates Germans and Irish or that he believes they should not have been allowed into the country. Rather, he is presenting an *a fortiori* form of reasoning that should be easy to grasp: because it was hard to assimilate, even before the welfare state, groups that were relatively similar to earlier immigrants, it would stand to reason, etc. Such thinking used to be taught in logic classes, but obviously not where Miller received his "education." Otherwise he would understand that Williamson is not psychically maladjusted but illustrating a demonstrable thesis, that even under favorable economic and cultural conditions, large-scale immigration creates problems for the host nation.

Miller also castigates him for a lack of faith in two fideistic assumptions. First, Williamson will not admit (oxymoronically) that "new traditions can develop organically"; and second, according to Williamson, by 2050 the political character of America may have changed to reflect a shifting cultural base. Miller assures us that no matter who may be here in the future, "we can remain devoted to the same political and social institutions." Unfortunately for this childlike faith, one would have no trouble documenting how entirely correct Williamson's view is.

More shocking than Miller's botched review is the refusal of the establishment press to treat seriously a widely held and earnestly argued position on immigration. This is not to say that liberal-neoconservative journalists must agree with Williamson and with other commentators who make the same case. But by assigning Williamson's book to someone who will safely pan it, they react irrationally to a set of arguments they will not even confront. In the past, I have noted the degree to which intellectuals and mediacrats now practice the "pathologization of dissent." Those who raise questions that the establishment press or the faculty of Harvard University find ideologically unacceptable are accused of being "bigoted" or "sick." By doing so, one can avoid the real issue at hand, or, in Williamson's case, the lack of faith in someone else's dream.

Senator Eugene McCarthy on *The Immigration Mystique*

Albert Schweitzer observed that when a civilization loses its ability to foresee and to forestall, it is headed for trouble. It is fair to question whether the United States is losing its independence, its sovereignty, its control over its resources, its economy, its culture, even its military forces; whether it is becoming, in effect, a colony of the world, or perhaps a neocolony.

It is the loss of control over our borders, both as to the movement of goods, principally drugs, and of people, both legal and illegal, that Chilton Williamson, Jr., takes up in *The Immigration Mystique*. He understands what the challenge is, not facts, not history, not logic, but a "mystique" or something very close to one. To oppose immigration liberalization, whether the immigration is legal or illegal, is to expose oneself to charges of being hardhearted, selfish, disrespectful of one's ancestors (as in the often-repeated claims that "We are all offspring of immigrants"; that one does not appreciate the economic and cultural contributions made by immigrants and their descendants; that one does not believe in the "melting pot," despite the fact that we have failed miserably in integrating black Americans into our economic and political, and even linguistic, culture; that one does not honor the inscription on the Statue of Liberty, written for us by a French poetess, etc.).

The time has come for us to examine, not only the mystique of immigration, along with Chilton Williamson, but to look at a whole series of mystiques, slogans, identifiable axioms, and sayings or quotations, that once may have been relative to American life and politics, but now serve only to distract and mislead. First, James Otis's revolutionary cry that "Taxation without representation is tyranny," which has been changed to "Taxation with representation is tyranny," and finally to "Representation without taxation," which is also tyranny.

Second, Jefferson's assertion (much quoted by conservatives) that "that government is best that governs least," spoken about the time that Jefferson was advocating the acceptance of the Constitution as an alternative to the nongovernment of the Articles of Confederation.

Third, Robert Harper's (with its variation by Minister Pinckney) "Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute," which should now be "Trillions for defense but only billions for tribute."

Fourth, "Politics stops at the water's edge." Not after Vietnam.

Fifth, "I believe in the two party system," defying John Adams' projection that the worst thing he could project for government under the Constitution was to have politics controlled by two strong factions.

Sixth, John Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country," which runs counter to Jefferson's lines in the Declaration of Independence, in which he suggests that a government should be asked to protect and achieve inalienable rights—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—and which does not wait for citizens to offer what they can do for the country, but asks for a pledge of lives, fortune, or sacred honor, which in modern times means the payment of taxes, participation in politics, and performance of citizens' military service.

The definitive case against the current immigration policy, if it can be called that, is the fundamental moral obligation of the nation to look first to the needs of our own people, and take no action which in a major way interferes with our fulfillment of that responsibility. Until greater progress is made in dealing with our own problems, we should either drop a veil over the inscription on the Statue of Liberty or possibly replace that inscription with one that is more appropriate, and in line with historical realities.

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The Personal Heresy

by Peter J. Stanlis

"Every great man nowadays has his disciples, and it is always Judas who writes the biography."

—Oscar Wilde

Robert Frost: A Biography
by Jeffrey Meyers
New York: Houghton Mifflin Company; 424 pp., $30.00

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In 1978 I published "Acceptable in Heaven's Sight: Robert Frost at Bread Loaf, 1939-1941," an account of three of eight summers of conversations with the poet in which—probably for the first time in print—he summarized the many serious flaws in the deliberately warped and repulsive portrait of Frost presented in Lawrance Thompson's "official" three-volume biography. Six years later, William H. Pritchard's *Frost: A Literary Life Reconsidered* corrected some of the more grievous faults in Thompson's work, while covering only a few selected portions of the poet's life. In a review-article of Pritchard's book, I emphasized that a new, accurate, complete, and balanced biography of Frost was badly needed.

The specific grounds of Thompson's mean-spirited biography were revealed in 1986 by Donald G. Sheehy in an excellent article, "The Poet as Neurotic: The Official Biography of Robert Frost." Examining the approximately 2,000 pages of Thompson's "Notes from Conversations with Robert Frost" in the Manuscripts Department of the University of Virginia Library, Sheehy discovered that Thompson had radically revised the first two volumes of his biography to fit his psychological portrait into the neo-Freudian psychiatric theory of Karen Horney's book, *Neurosis and Human Growth: The Struggle Toward Self-Realization*. Sheehy noted that Thompson had made "a chapter-by-chapter outline of Horney's work" and then

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applied her theory to Frost, thus "unmasking" the real or nasty private poet behind the deceptive figure of public myth so admired and loved by his readers. Sheehy's revelations were confirmed and extended by Stanley Burnshaw, Frost's last editor at Holt, Rinehart and Winston, in *Robert Frost Himself* (1986), particularly in the chapter "The Fabrication of the 'Monster' Myth."

Two years later, John Evangelist Walsh published *Into My Own*, a favorable biographical view of Frost as a man and poet during his years in England, 1912-1915. This study was reinforced by *The Frost Family's Adventure in Poetry* (1994), Lesley Lee Francis's accurate and balanced portrait of the poet's warm and close-knit relationship with his wife and children in their life together during the years on the farm in Derry, New Hampshire, and in England. Both of these books picture Frost as a devoted family man, generous with his time in educating his children at home, playful in the spirit of sheer morning gladness at the brim in spite of strains brought on by poverty and his lack of recognition as a poet. These biographical studies covered a limited timespan, however important, in Frost's life, so that a complete biography remained a pressing need.

Jeffrey Meyers' *Robert Frost: A Biography*, dealing as it does with the poet's entire life, needs to be examined not only in light of the recent state of biographical studies on Frost, but through an understanding of the poet's own conception of biography and his philosophy of life, including especially his aesthetic theory, creative practice, and view of the nature of poetry as an art form.

Perhaps the most important statement Frost ever wrote regarding how a reader, critic, or biographer should (or should not) approach a poet's work occurs in a letter to Sidney Cox (April 19, 1932), replying to the expressed wish of his Dartmouth College friend to write a personal, Boswellian biographical study of him:

> You are getting out of hand. . . . I grow surer I don't want to search the poet's mind too seriously. I might enjoy threatening to for the fun of it just as I might to frisk his person. I have written to keep the over curious out of the secret places of my mind both in my verse and in my letters to such as you. A subject has to be held clear outside of me with struts and as it were set up for an object. A subject must be an object. . . . My objection to your larger book about

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Peter J. Stanlis is professor emeritus of Rockford College in Illinois. His most recent book is Edmund Burke: The Enlightenment and Revolution *(Transaction).*

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> me was that it came thrusting in where I did not want you. The idea is the thing with me. It would seem soft for instance to look in my life for the sentiments in the "Death of the Hired Man." There's nothing to it believe me. . . . The objective idea is all I ever cared about. Most of my ideas occur in verse. . . . But I never reckoned with the personalities. I keep to a minimum of such stuff in any poet's life and works. Art and wisdom with the body heat out of it. . . . To be too subjective with what an artist has managed to make objective is to come on him presumptuously and render ungraceful what he in pain of his life had faith he had made graceful.

Less than three years earlier, Frost had cautioned Cox, also by letter, in a way that should have prevented him from "getting out of hand": "I'm never so desperate for material that I have to trench on the confidential for one thing, nor on the private for another, nor on the personal." These statements are further reinforced by Frost's frequently voiced aesthetic principle that there is no fallacy greater than that art is self-expression.

In condemning what C.S. Lewis called "the personal heresy" in art Frost was not objecting to biography as such but only to the presumptuous methods and objectives of subjective-oriented biographers, such as Freudians and others with a doctrinaire ideology, who were bent *a priori* upon exploring "the secret places" of his mind and emotional life while ignoring or minimizing the objective "art and wisdom" in his poetry and philosophical ideas. Frost believed that the most important consideration for a biographer was his philosophical principles ("the idea is the thing with me") and his poetry as an art form, not his subjective emotional nature or condition.

In a letter to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Emily Dickinson denied the validity of a purely autobiographical interpretation of her poems: "When I state myself, as the representative of the verse—it does not mean—me—but a supposed person." Frost always held to the same principle of aesthetics. Implicit in his denial that "the sentiments in the 'Death of the Hired Man'" could be found in his personal life are two of Frost's cardinal principles of aesthetics: that during the creative process the poet discovers the theme in his subject and experiences a revelation, and that the completed poem is essentially an objective, autonomous, fictional product of the poet's imagination, skill in technique, and passion for form—not a projection or record of his personal history or disguised autobiography. As early as 1915, in a letter to Louis Untermeyer, Frost wrote, "Let us never take a poet as a subject."

Throughout his life Frost objected strongly whenever anyone tried to interpret one of his poems as disguised autobiography. In 1939, during the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference when a woman conferee asked what *he* meant by his poem "Fire and Ice," Frost quoted the poem and said, "It means that." The woman looked baffled. To underscore the objective self-sufficiency of his poem Frost added, "If I had wanted to say anything more I would have included it in the poem." When the conferee persisted in assuming that the poem was merely Frost's personal self-expression, he put her down with a withering rhetorical question: "When I use the word 'I' in a poem, surely you don't think I mean me?" In his poem "Iota Subscript," Frost underscored his aesthetic principle that art is not primarily self-expression: "Seek not in me the big I capital." To Frost, poetry was not adjunct to psychology, science, religion, grammar, history, or any other subject, it was an end in itself. Whatever poetry contributed to a better understanding of these subjects was derivative, a by-product of the poem as an art object. Neither the confessional-type of poetry nor a tabloid press sensation-seeking type of biography was acceptable to Frost.

Large portions of Meyers' biography necessarily deal with basic empirical facts of Frost's life that have been long established by previous biographers, particularly Thompson. Meyers has assimilated these facts well and presents them in a chronological principle of arrangement, so that he provides much essential information in the unfolding important developments in the poet's life. But his heavy dependence upon Thompson suggests a scissors-and-paste job that sometimes lands him in errors. For example, he follows his predecessor's false statement that Frost willed the Homer Noble Farm to Kay Morrison, whereas it was willed in fact to Middlebury College, with the provision that the Morrisons might occupy it for ten summers after his death. A year before the decade was up, I visited the Morrisons on the farm and heard them complain bitterly that Frost should have left them the use of the farm for their lifetime.

Others of Meyers' errors are of his own making, the result of carelessness or haste. During the summer of 1962 I invited Frost to give a poetry reading and receive an honorary degree at the University of Detroit. Meyers describes this event:

> In November 1962 Frost read to his largest audience, 8,500 at the University of Detroit, and showed astonishing resilience and energy. He spoke for 90 minutes without sipping water or missing a line, and answered all the questions with clarity, liveliness and wit. When he finished the stunning performance and came off the stage, Kay was waiting for him in the wings.

There are at least four errors in Meyers' statement. First, the audience was closer to 10,000; 8,500 people sat in the athletic arena of the Memorial Building, but an additional 1,500 were under the arena stands in a gym equipped with closed-circuit television reception. Second, Frost, who was quite ill while in Detroit, did not display "astonishing resilience and energy." Third, he read and commented for slightly more than an hour, but owing to the size of the audience, there was no question period afterward. Fourth, during Frost's visit Kay Morrison was in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Meyers has fused Frost's poetry reading in Detroit with one he gave at Dartmouth College after he returned to Cambridge from Detroit. This type of error does not provide much grounds for confidence in the biographer.

But a far more serious flaw in Meyers' biography is his total lack of awareness and knowledge of or concern for Frost's philosophical beliefs and life of the mind. In a letter to Thompson (July 11, 1959), Frost identified his philosophical and intellectual nature beyond dispute: "I am a dualist." Whereas Thompson garbled Frost's philosophical dualism and failed to understand its crucial importance, Meyers totally ignores it. As a consequence he has no comprehension of the philosophical basis of Frost's views on science, religion, aesthetics, poetry, education, society, and politics. His sub-

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ject's whole intellectual life is set aside as irrelevant by Meyers, who seems to share the common belief that since Frost was a poet, not a philosopher, no consideration should be given to his abilities as a thinker.

Yet Frost's intellectual genius, far greater than that of most poets, should be obvious. Certainly he was not a philosopher in the sense that Plato, Aristotle, or Kant were philosophers, abstract systematic thinkers. Yet many persons who knew Frost well have testified to his brilliance as a profound thinker and conversationalist. Wilfred W. Gibson noted how Frost dominated his fellow poets in England with his "rich and ripe philosophy." In *Robert Frost: A Pictorial Chronicle* (1974), Kay Morrison noted how Frost's "remarkable mind could cut through trivialities and come up with a deep understanding of matters not ordinarily considered within the scope of poetry." His brilliance in this respect was based upon a tremendous erudition, so that "he astounded scientists by his ready understanding of underlying principles even in areas as recondite as mathematics and nuclear fission." She summarized the poet's intellectual nature as a "formidable mind—constantly active, skeptical, believing, joking, probing, mocking, sometimes giving offense, sometimes warmly genial, the delight and wonder of visits from everywhere. . . . To encounter Robert Frost was to encounter one of the notable minds of a generation, a mind with restless curiosity seeking for the truth unfettered by secondhand opinions and moving to its target swiftly as an arrow. Many witnesses could testify to the range of his intellectual force." Unfortunately, no reader of this biography would glean from it the great intellectual force and range of Frost's mind.

Frost himself once told an audience that "there is danger of forgetting that poetry must include the mind, as well as the emotions." Since his dualism involved conflicts "between endless things in pairs ordained to everlasting opposition," such as the conflict between justice and mercy, Frost's dualism is most evident in his dramatic poems *A Masque of Reason* and *A Masque of Mercy*, and in his narrative poems "New Hampshire," "Build Soil," and "The Lesson for Today." Consistent with Meyers' failure ever to rise above an impressionistic surface journalism to a philosophical understanding of Frost as a thinker and poet, he either denigrates or ignores all of these poems. The religious, social, and political ideas in these poems are filled with irony, wit, banter, whimsy, paradoxes, puns, and ambiguities, and their serious themes are presented in a true Horatian vein. These poems satirize the secular and rational beliefs regarding modern society and culture held by many of Frost's liberal critics whose strictures against Frost Meyers quotes, accepting their fatuous judgments at face value before dismissing Frost's dramatic and narrative poems as artistic failures. Meyers can respond only to Frost's lyrical poems, which lend themselves more readily to the personal interpretations consistent with the psycho-biographical approach to Frost's life and poetry.

If, as Meyers says, "the heart of Thompson's biography was based upon a lie," so too is his own claim that in being the first to document Frost's love affair with Kay Morrison he thereby acquires the vehicle by which to reinterpret the whole of the poet's life and art. Frost himself confided his affair to Untermeyer, Hervey Allen, and other friends, and after 1940 it was common knowledge among the Writers' Conference staff and longtime residents at Bread Loaf, one of whom, Dulcie Scott, first revealed it to Thompson. Meyers' hyperbolic reference to sex in describing Frost's life and poetry results in many incredible conclusions, while his "original" findings are stated in the crude and sensational language of soap-opera journalism. Among the worst are his undocumented speculations that Frost's mother was the illegitimate child of a prostitute; that as a boy Frost seduced his future wife; and that he was expelled from Dartmouth, rather than quit of his own accord. (Meyers accepts at face value the hearsay testimony in 1986 of the son of a boyhood friend of Frost's that the poet was expelled in 1892.) Meyers' portrait of Frost's daughter Lesley is filled with an animus wholly unwarranted by any facts. Despite his unreliable and even unscrupulous methods, Meyers claims that "this biography offers a radically new view of Frost's character and an original interpretation of his poems." He then cites 13 poems that he interprets mainly in the light of Frost's affair with Kay Morrison.

What to Frost was the unspeakable heresy of art as self-expression runs through the whole of Meyers' interpretation of Frost's poems. Frost's injunction, "Don't tell the poem in other and worse English" applies perfectly to Meyers, who almost never rises above a prose paraphrase of Frost's poems. Meyers notes that Frost disliked "pedantic academic critics, who lacked insight into a poet's imagination," but he lacks the wit and humility to see that this criticism applies even more completely to his own psycho-sexual analysis of poetry. In his constant desire to expose "the secret places" in Frost's psyche, Meyers finds one-to-one cause-and-effect connections between specific events in Frost's life and the plot, themes, and metaphors in his poems. His method in literary criticism is similar to the literal-mindedness of a religious fundamentalist who arbitrarily abstracts a passage from the Bible and connects it with a particular event in modern times in order to draw out a sensational conclusion. Jeffrey Meyers does not understand that the universality in poetic theme or metaphor poem makes several meanings possible within their semantic context, but precludes any arbitrary and particular application to external matters. He injects crude and tasteless sexual interpretations upon many of Frost's poems, particularly upon "The Most of It" and "The Silken Tent."

Frost wrote to Sidney Cox (September 19, 1929), "We shall be judged finally by the delicacy of our feeling of where to stop short." If he is right, Meyers' biography will be dismissed as a vulgar aberration, a presumptuous and tasteless work which leaves the need for a definitive and balanced biography of Frost greater even than it was before. c

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His Final Lesson

by Scott P. Richert

The Sword of Imagination: Memoirs of a Half-Century of Literary Conflict
by Russell Kirk
Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company;
497 pp., $35.00

◆

A friend of mine has expressed the devout hope that, upon his death, his wife and children will have the good sense to burn his papers. While his main desire is to prevent unfinished thoughts from seeing the light of day, there are other, equally important, concerns. Posthumously published works allow enemies to attack without fear of reprisal; even worse, they encourage excessive—and uncritical—adulation from friends. *The Sword of Imagination* has provoked both responses.

By the time of his death in 1994, Russell Kirk had generated an impressive body of work that included over 30 books and hundreds of articles and reviews. Departing from this vale of tears, he left behind his completed but unpublished memoirs, which appeared a year later as the current volume. In the preface, Kirk notes his peculiar (but for him characteristic) stylistic choice: "Emulating Julius Caesar, Henry Esmond, and Henry Adams, I express my memoirs, throughout the following chapters, in the third person—that mode being less embarrassing to authors who set at defiance the ravenous ego. Besides, when the man within . . . regards critically the life of the outer man, it may be possible to attain some degree of objectivity—using that word in its signification of detachment from strong emotion or personal prejudice." Curiously, Kirk was too much of a Romantic not to know that "objectivity," especially regarding oneself, is a fiction. Indeed, the pretense of objectivity often serves as cover for "the ravenous ego," rather than setting it at defiance. Some readers, especially if they did not know Kirk, may suspect that to be true in this case.

The decision to write in the third person may be at once the book's strongest point and its weakest. It allows Kirk to put into writing emotions that he could never express in the first person, especially about his family life. On the other hand, portions of *The Sword of Imagination* (for instance, where the author discusses the importance of his own work, or its influence) read like the work of a biographer, even a hagiographer, rather than an autobiography. While he may have seen himself in the third person (and some who were close to him often suspected he did), Kirk might better have left an appraisal of his own work to others.

Forty years after the publication of a book is probably too soon to be able to gauge its long-term significance. Yet Kirk attributes the rightward drift of American politics in recent decades in no small part to the influence of *The Conservative Mind*: "So it was that *The Conservative Mind*—working through a kind of intellectual osmosis and popularized through newspapers and mass-audience magazines, radio and even television commentators, and other media of opinion—gradually helped to alter the climate of political and moral opinion. A generation later, Kirk's works would be cited and quoted by the president and the vice president of the United States." Whether, a century from now, historians will draw such a connection is anybody's guess; but even if they should do so, what would it mean? Ronald Reagan quoted more often from Tom Paine, the intellectual enemy of Kirk's hero, Edmund Burke, than from any other political figure; and in his eight years in office, he enshrined as the centerpiece of conservatism those "dreams of avarice" that Kirk wanted to get beyond. Though Kirk writes of President Eisenhower that he "and his people did retard the advance of the welfare state in America but did little to give flesh to the conservative imagination," Reagan and his people merely fed that imagination a steady diet of Hollywood-style celluloid. (Kirk admits as much: "Mr. Reagan was endowed with a certain power of imagination; successful actors almost necessarily have a talent for image-making.") As for the Vice President who quoted from Kirk's works, when he ascended to the presidency Kirk found him "worse than unimaginative—merely silly, often," and "would come to detest Bush for his carpet-bombing of the Cradle of Civilization with its taking of a quarter of a million lives in Iraq." And "so in 1992 Kirk became general chairman of Patrick Buchanan's campaign in the Michigan primary." If *The Conservative Mind* really led to Reagan and Bush, even Kirk might question the value of that accomplishment.

Unlike Eisenhower and Reagan, Kirk did help to "give flesh to the conservative imagination," and the number of conservative luminaries who claim that his works played a role in their political and intellectual development is legion. But today, with the conservative movement in a shambles and the Republican Party headed for self-immolation in November, perhaps we can learn a final lesson from Russell Kirk. For unlike those who have succumbed to the siren song of Washington, D.C., Kirk realized that the lasting accomplishments of his life were not political, nor even intellectual. Rather, they surrounded him every day, and he presents them here in loving detail: a devoted wife, who still works tirelessly to keep his memory alive; four gracious daughters, who will raise their children well, as they were raised; a congeries of assistants, who planted trees and took long walks with Kirk, and came to see the woods and fields that surround Mecosta, and even the little village itself, through the lens of his Romantic imagination.

In an age of abstractions, in which "Efficiency and Progress and Equality" are seen as more real than "all those fascinating and lovable peculiarities of human nature and human society that are the products of prescription and tradition," Kirk cultivated a sense of mystery and awe and wonder. To his eyes, Mecosta, shunned and despised by the commissars of big government, big business, and big culture, was a Brigadoon. As a business partner of Kirk's once remarked, "Russell, you are the last of the Romantics, and probably the greatest: for nobody else could make tales out of that God-forsaken Mecosta County."

That Romantic imagination is Kirk's greatest legacy. If his influence should continue on into the next century, it will be because those who knew him had their imagination awakened to possibili-

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ties greater than those dreamed of in Washington, D.C., New York, and Los Angeles. Those possibilities are what make life worth living, and they—more so than Kirk's discussions of politics, or his portraits of famous acquaintances—are what make *The Sword of Imagination* worth reading.

Scott P. Richert is the assistant editor of The Family in America, *a publication of The Rockford Institute. He worked for Mrs. Kirk in 1995.*

Heathen Days

by Gregory McNamee

A World of Their Own Making
by John R. Gillis
New York: Basic Books;
310 pp., $28.00

◆

It all started with television. Early in 1992, then Vice President Dan Quayle took the sitcom *Murphy Brown* to task because its lead, played by Candice Bergen, was to give birth out of wedlock. The show and its sponsors' apparent endorsement of this transgression, Quayle argued, was proof that the entertainment industry was antifamily, or, at least, against the traditional American family as defined by Ozzie and Harriet, by the Cleavers and Ricardos.

Quayle, as it happens, was right: television had moved beyond the comfortable, happy, two-parent family; an artifact that, at least to the scriptwriters, seemed to belong to a time past. The new television household, the world of the Simpsons and Bundys and Connors, was something altogether different from those of *Mayberry R.F.D.* and *Family Affair*, to name two of the top-ten shows a quarter-century ago. Still, by making the role of *Happy Days* an ideal for the age, Quayle opened himself to the perhaps justifiable charge that he could not sufficiently distinguish televised fiction from lived reality, much as George Bush seemingly could not comprehend shopping for one's own groceries. His appeal to replace Candice Bergen and her ilk with more wholesome role models did not work: American voters did not endorse Quayle's viewpoint in the 1992 election, but *Murphy Brown* continues to air.

It being an election year, the issue of family values is once more in the news. "Today," writes social historian John Gillis in *A World of Their Own Making*, "both Democrats and Republicans deploy equally apocalyptic visions of family decline and social disorder. And although most Americans do not believe their own family life to be in immediate danger, they are quick to perceive their neighbors being in total disrepair." That perception, Gillis maintains, is an old one, a current that has long flowed through our history. Bill Clinton may trace the decline in family values to an uncaring government and economic system, Bob Dole to the corrupting influence of the welfare state and the Hollywoodization of the culture. In either case, the assumption holds that we once lived in a golden age where the two-parent, self-sufficient family was paramount, and that we have somehow fallen from this state of grace.

All golden ages are mythic. The one to which our presidential candidates advert is no exception, growing from the idealized family of the 1950's, itself an idealized version of the family in the Depression Era: a bulwark us-against-them struggle in the face of hard times. Those who lived in the 1950's—and in the 20's and 30's—will tell you that the reality was far different from the cheerful, sanitized history that has been conferred on those eras; but, as Gillis notes in his lively revisionist history of the American family, that has not kept the myth from overpowering the truth.

The realities are indeed different. One of the cornerstones of our supposed golden age is the notion of the family based upon partners who were monogamous, Eros being contained within marriage. Gillis combs the census records to show that, throughout our history, this was not always the case. Premarital pregnancy rates in most American states, he writes, have never fallen below ten percent, and sometimes have reached 30 percent, especially in rural areas. Little shame attached to these out-of-wedlock adventures. "Before the nineteenth century," Gillis maintains, "no great fuss was made about premarital pregnancy or even illegitimate birth as long as the community was assured that it would not be unduly burdened by the child." Indeed, childless couples were viewed as being somehow more unnatural than unwed teenage mothers, a view that still obtains in many unsuburbanized parts of the world.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Newt Gingrich alike summed up the golden-age idyll, Gillis continues, with their proposed return to a system of orphanages in which the unsanctioned newly born are to be housed. Gillis points to a flaw in that plan by noting that before World War II, when they began to disappear, orphanages were in the main short-term holding centers, halfway houses on the way to family placement. With a decline

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in available two-parent families to take in these "orphans"—mostly the children of so-called welfare mothers—the likely result will instead be a new class of semipermanent government wards.

Another golden-age myth assumes the presence of a father quietly prepared for all crises and on hand at every formative moment of his children's lives. Gillis counters that until quite recently fathers—and mothers—worked such long hours that they saw their children only on Sundays, their one day off. Now that working hours are again increasing, parents—those at least who have jobs—are likely to be absent as well from their children's lives. Compulsory education, Gillis notes, was initially intended to remedy this situation, replacing the ubiquitous parents of family workshop and farm with the authority of the state *in loco parentis*. Parents were left to carve out "quality time" for their families (as much a concern in Victorian times as now) from the tattered remnants of the week. The absence from home of parents and children also led to a decidedly ungolden regimentation. Gillis observes: "It was in the 1850's and 1860's, exactly when work and school time were first imposing their relentless regime on middle-class families, that families began to organize the day into an endless cycle of meals and bedtimes that has changed remarkably little ever since."

The golden age may never have existed but it exerts a powerful influence on us, leading to such strange phenomena as "holiday trauma," our latest wide-scale social disease: the product of a demand for choreographed performances in which family members play an assigned part in manufacturing togetherness, and in which children remain children no matter how old they may be. Among its other manifestations are the self-styled "family restaurants" that now seem to occupy every street corner, advertising their soups and microwave-heated dinners as homemade, and—oddest of all—Las Vegas casinos billing themselves as "family destinations."

Times are changing, though: in the last quarter century the number of American households made up of one person has increased from 13 to 26 percent of the total, while the percentage of children living with a single parent has increased from 12 to 27 percent. Yet the family endures; "flexing," Gillis observes, "rather than breaking," through mechanisms like the shared custody of children. This of course is far from the televised ideal: even the Simpsons live under one roof. But, Gillis suggests, to seek to retrieve a golden past that restores (to borrow from Hollywood) a condition in which men are the producers and women the directors of real-life family drama is misguided at best. It could even cost someone an election.

Gregory McNamee's most recent book is The Sierra Club Desert Reader.

Fragments of Tile

by Norma Williamson

The Sierra Club Desert Reader: A Literary Companion
Edited by Gregory McNamee
San Francisco: Sierra Club Books; 306 pp., $16.00

◆

By definition, an anthology is a collection of stories, poems, excerpts from literary works, etc., that are published together because they represent a particular time period, literary style, or theme. What to include and what to leave out is always a problem; however, *The Sierra Club Desert Reader: A Literary Companion*, edited by Gregory McNamee, must have presented unusual difficulties. *Desert Reader* comprises excerpts from fiction, poetry, travel writing, journals, folk tales, songs, and other literature about the great deserts of our world, including selections by distinguished authors, historical figures, philosophers, historians, explorers, and travelers covering a 2,000-year span. Earth's dry lands with their wild nature, vast expanses of empty space, and harsh climatic extremes have influenced human art, culture, and religion since the beginning of recorded history. In an introduction to *Desert Reader*, McNamee explains the problem as well as his criterion: "The deserts of the world have spawned a significant body of literature, a corpus well out of proportion to the number of people who actually dwell in them. . . . In this anthology, I have attempted to gather some of the best of that body of writing, observing the American poet Ezra Pound's dictum that literature 'is news that stays news.' I do not, of course, pretend to completeness; that is the nature of an anthology, a selection of texts that reflects the editor's tastes and prejudices."

Although arid lands account for about 20 percent of Earth's surface, scientists and other experts apparently cannot agree on what ought to be considered true desert. In his introduction, McNamee talks about the variety of landscapes subsumed by the word "desert": "The very word conjures up mystery, evokes the windswept fastness of Beau Geste and Lawrence of Arabia. That mystery may be a sign of its imprecision, for the term embraces an improbable vast range of landscapes from the comparatively lush columnar cactus forests of Arizona and Sonora to the Antarctic, where 90 percent of the planet's fresh water lies locked in ice." For *Desert Reader*, McNamee has accepted the broadest possible definition and included literary works from regions—even the Antarctic—where rainfall is very scant or irregular, vegetation is sparse, and there are prevailing winds that dry up, or drive away, normal rainfall. However, the Antarctic continent, although it receives the least precipitation of any region on Earth, will seem an unlikely desert to those who do not accept McNamee's definition. While the Antarctic section contains many poignant passages—for example, a letter written by British explorer Robert Scott just before his death in 1912 during an unsuccessful attempt to reach the South Pole first—that illustrate the savage nature of all of Earth's arid lands, its inclusion serves only to broaden further the scope of an anthology that is already too ambitious in its conception.

It is impossible, nevertheless, to dislike an anthology that includes Edith Wharton, Mark Twain, Charles Darwin, Charles M. Doughty, T.E. Lawrence, Jorge Luis Borges, Mary Austin, John Muir, Edward Abbey, and Bruce Chatterton, to name just a few. Many of McNamee's selections are superb. An excerpt from Mary Austin's *The Land of Little Rain* leads the section on North American deserts. In the selection chosen by McNamee, Austin (a contemporary of John Muir) graphically defines the desert country that first captured her imagination when she was a young woman newly arrived in the Southwest: "East away from the Sierras, south from Panamint and Amargosa, east and south

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many an uncounted mile, is the Country of Lost Borders. . . . This is the nature of that country. There are hills, rounded, blunt, burned, squeezed up out of chaos, chrome and vermilion painted, aspiring to the snow-line. Between the hills lie high level-looking plains full of intolerable sun glare, or narrow valleys drowned in a blue haze."

Austin and the Argentinean poet Jorge Luis Borges, who describes the desolate Patagonian countryside in an excerpt from his novel *The South*, set a tone and mood for *Desert Reader* that is unfortunately diluted by the sheer volume of less effective passages. Both Borges and Austin obviously understand the principle that less can be more. Borges writes: "The intolerable white sun of high noon had already become the yellow sun which precedes nightfall, and it would not be long before it would turn red. . . . Outside the moving shadow of the railroad car stretched toward the horizon. The elemental earth was not perturbed either by settlements or other signs of humanity. The country was vast but at the same time intimate and, in some measure, secret. The limitless country sometimes contained only a solitary bull. The solitude was perfect, perhaps hostile, and it might have occurred to Dahlmann that he was traveling in the past and not merely south."

In a selection from Edith Wharton's memoir, *In Morocco*, published in 1906, Wharton turns her marvelous gift for telling detail to a lush description of a 19th-century Moroccan castle:

> Court within court, garden beyond garden, reception halls, private apartments, slaves' quarters, sunny prophets' chambers of the roofs and baths in vaulted crypts, the labyrinth of passages and rooms stretches away over several acres of ground. A long court enclosed in pale-green trellis work, where pigeons plume themselves about a great tank and the dripping tiles glitter with refracted sunlight, leads to the fresh gloom of a cypress garden, or under jasmine tunnels bordered with running water; and these again open on arcaded apartments faced with tiles and stucco-work, where in languid twilight, the hours drift by to the ceaseless music of the fountains.

Desert Reader contains so much effective writing that one hesitates to be overly critical, and McNamee does make a good case for the need to protect our fragile arid lands. However, one does wish he had heeded the philosophy expressed by an old Algerian describing the desert as "the Garden of Allah, from which the Lord of the faithful removed all superfluous human and animal life, so that there might be one place where he can walk in peace." Despite McNamee's disclaimer that he has made no attempt at completeness, the broadness of the subject matter and his eclectic standards of selectivity have resulted in an anthology that proves once again that more of a good thing is not necessarily better. *Desert Reader* may be compared to an ancient tile mosaic that has been unearthed and reassembled. The reassembled tile fragments offer tantalizing hints of the original beauty of the mosaic, but the full impact of its original design is lost forever. The many really fine passages contained in *Desert Reader* suggest what the anthology might have been had McNamee narrowed its scope and discriminated more in both the selection and the editing.

Norma Williamson is a freelance writer living in Dubois, Wyoming.

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by Samuel Francis

Suicide of the Right

After spending several weeks in deep hugger-mugger at the Republican Party platform committee this summer, the leaders of the right wing of the GOP emerged triumphant. Their deeply beloved and totally useless Human Life Amendment was reaffirmed. The obnoxious statement of "tolerance" for the opinions of those who disagree with the amendment was excised. Language about immigration, fair trade, the Second Amendment, and other issues important to the right, religious and otherwise, was approved. The *Washington Post*, reporting on the adoption of the platform the next day, seemed ready to be taken off to a nice quiet place in the country to recuperate from its neurotic angst over the American right and its victory. "The Republican platform committee today approved a statement of party principles closer in tone and emphasis to the nationalism and domestic conservatism of Patrick J. Buchanan than the party's presumptive nominee Robert J. Dole," trembled the *Post*'s Thomas Edsall. And, for once, the general staff of the legions of the right was in agreement. "This is very Buchanan," beamed Bay Buchanan, Mr. Buchanan's sister and campaign chairman. "We could not be more pleased. This is much more of a populist, conservative Buchananesque platform than we ever dreamed, to be honest." Other leaders of the right like Phyllis Schlafly, Gary Bauer, and Ralph Reed concurred.

Well, since we're being honest, the truth is that the conservatives got suckered, as some of them realized in the next few days when speaker after speaker ascended the podium at the Republican convention to avoid, contradict, or simply ignore the platform that had just been adopted. By the time Mr. Dole was officially chosen as the party's leader, the *New York Times* reported, some foes of abortion were mystified. "A lot of pro-life people are saying, 'What's going on here?'" whimpered one antiabortion delegate, Mrs. Elaine Hawkins of San Antonio. "It's like they've squished the issue out of existence. We know it's there in print, but I don't hear anybody talking about it."

Nor was it only abortion that nobody talked about. "I haven't read the platform and I'm not bound by it anyway," Mr. Dole proudly announced to the press. The *Post*'s David Broder reported the next week that "Dole, Speaker Newt Gingrich and party chairman Haley Barbour were comically eager to affirm that they paid the document so little heed they hadn't even read it." As for the central feature of the platform's immigration plank, a resolution calling for a constitutional amendment or constitutionally valid legislation to end automatic citizenship for the children of illegal aliens born on American soil, former Representative Vin Weber, a close advisor to Mr. Dole, let it be known that Mr. Dole simply did not support it. Mr. Dole himself since said publicly he did not support it. The *Wall Street Journal*'s Al Hunt gleefully reported the next week that the party's vice presidential nominee, Jack Kemp, was "horrified by the platform's call to deny citizenship to children born in America of illegal immigrants." By the end of the convention it was clear to everyone save those who wrap themselves in illusion that the conservative efforts to craft the party platform meant nothing. Inevitably, the lines of poet John Dryden crept into the mind: "All, all of a piece throughout: Thy chase had a beast in view; Thy wars brought nothing about; Thy lovers were all untrue."

But actually something had been brought about. By engaging in the conflict over the meaningless platform, the conservatives allowed Mr. Dole to quell the incipient rebellion from the right and to unify the party under his leadership. The convention began with Mr. Dole and the party establishment uncertain whether Pat Buchanan would endorse the final ticket or quit the GOP and run with Howard Phillips' Taxpayers Party and thereby deny any possibility of victory in November to a party establishment that had ignored, insulted, and abused him and his three million supporters ever since he announced his candidacy. By the time the platform had been adopted, with considerable input from the Buchananites, that option was no longer possible, even if it had been desirable. By working with the platform committee, by writing a platform with which "we could not be more pleased," the Buchananites and the Republican right in general signed their own political death warrants, binding themselves to the party and the ticket, consigning themselves to political irrelevance, and ensuring that any walkout or rebellion they mounted thereafter would be universally regarded as simply one more confirmation of the fanaticism and sourness that their enemies habitually attribute to them.

If there was any doubt of the irrelevance of the right to its own party, the selection of Mr. Kemp removed it. No other neoconservative leader in the country commands as much of a political following (which is not to say that he necessarily commands much of a following), and no other major Republican leader is as much in thrall to neoconservatism as a body of ideas and as an organized faction, as Mr. Kemp. Unable or unwilling to mount a campaign in the primaries, Mr. Kemp stayed out of the contest for the nomination and was widely regarded as politically defunct. His support for affirmative action in the face of the growing Republican and conservative consensus against it; his support for NAFTA, the World Trade Organization, and unlimited "free trade" in general; his foreign policy of global democratism; his enthusiastic and fiscally catastrophic attachment to Big Government, as evidenced by his enlargement of the Housing and Urban Development Department in the Bush administration; his bottomless zeal for civil rights laws and policies; and his fierce hostility to any suggestion of immigration control in the face of growing popular and intellectual disenchantment with immigration all placed him on the left of the Republican Party and in bitter opposition to its Buchananite, America First, culture war, nativist, protectionist, populist, and new nationalist right that actually entered the primaries and seemed for a while to be on the eve of victory. The choice of Mr. Kemp as Bob Dole's running mate and the resur-

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rection of the representative leader of a political persuasion and faction that has no tangible popular support outside the Beltway was a calculated kick in the groin to the right by the party's leadership, a kick to which the right, after its platform triumph, was unable to respond with the only weapon it had left, the threat of secession from the party; and if this ticket wins the race against President Clinton, its victory will almost certainly mean the political extinction of the kind of conservatism the Buchananite right represents.

If the ticket wins, Mr. Kemp as vice president will be positioned for his own race for the White House in 2000 and, barring a disaster in the Dole administration, will have the inside track to the nomination. Even if the ticket loses, it is not difficult to anticipate what the neoconservative and even the liberal line will be—that Mr. Buchanan and the right stuck the ticket with an "extremist" platform that simply frightened away mainstream voters, that the decrepit Mr. Dole was not supportive of Mr. Kemp's pollyggoggle policy-wonkism and refused to unleash his running mate's bottomless genius, that Mr. Kemp was the unsung hero of the 1996 ticket and ought to be given another opportunity to crush the narrow-minded Mr. Buchanan and to redefine the American right in his own generous Lincolnesque image. Win or lose, then, the real victor to emerge from the Byzantine backstairs politics of San Diego this summer will be Mr. Kemp and his Beltway cabal, who will proceed to redefine the American right in their own terms and to back up their redefinition with political power.

For the Buchananite right, the Christian Right, the Old Right, the Hard Right, the paleoconservatives, and the palcolibertarians, that will mean political oblivion, the final disappearance of any serious hope of influencing American politics in a direction away from the gargantuan state and the state's alliance with both overclass and underclass against the middle class, or in a direction toward dismantling the warfare-welfare state, controlling immigration, reversing the erosion of national sovereignty, withdrawing from the pursuit of a globalist-imperialist foreign policy, and restoring a Eurocentric cultural order. It is one thing to lose an election, but as long as the losers are able to define the opposition, they retain the possibility of eventual victory. It is another thing to lose the opposition itself, to allow not only the victors but the losers themselves to define the terms of debate and the rules of the game. That is what the election, and maybe even the defeat, of the Dole-Kemp ticket this year would mean—that it is not the real right that defines the opposition and sets the framework of the political discourse but the fake right the Dole-Kemp ticket represents.

Of course, the rank-and-file Republican and the average citizen who votes for this ticket against Mr. Clinton cannot be blamed for his choice. Supporting the reelection of an administration led by one of the most repulsive men in American political history, mottled with the gangrene of corruption and sexual license and emitting the stench of tyranny, is not a choice most decent Americans should welcome, regardless of their political beliefs. But the fact is that the reelection of Bill Clinton might just be better for the nation and the only political forces able to salvage it than the victory of Mr. Dole and his running mate. The evils of the Clinton era should not be the trump card by which a rival party, today almost indistinguishable from the Democrats in their basic worldview and policies, is allowed to win a rigged deal.

At least since the nomination of Dwight Eisenhower in 1952, the real right in the United States has voted for the Republican ticket on the grounds that it was choosing the lesser of two evils, and every four years we hear the same refrain from the ticket's apologists—that the country just cannot survive Adlai Stevenson, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, George McGovern, Jimmy Carter, Walter Mondale, Michael Dukakis, or Bill Clinton. But the truth is that of course it does survive and that the victories of the centrist Republicans who are these villains' foes never make any difference anyway. Conservatives, having worked themselves into a dither over the iniquity of the Democrats, fall for this argument in every election, and then, within a few years or a few weeks, are amazed to find that the centrist Republican candidates whom they have put in power have betrayed and ignored them once again. The argument that we just have to support the lesser of two evils to avoid destruction is merely a formula by which evil is perpetuated in power and by which men and measures that are not evil are driven into perpetual exile; if the real right listens to the formula yet again this year, it may be the last time it will enjoy the opportunity to hear it.

Yet it may be that I exaggerate. Neither Mr. Dole nor Mr. Kemp is able to represent the social forces that are beginning to rally around the real right that they managed to snooker at their convention this year, and it remains questionable if Mr. Dole's endless rehearsals of his adventures in a war that ended more than 50 years ago and Mr. Kemp's childish bubble-chatter about utopias of high technology, unlimited growth, and everybody getting rich will speak to the people whom Whittaker Chambers called "the plain men and women of the nation," who see their material wealth, their communities, their nation, their people, and their civilization vanishing before their eyes. Even if they are still unwilling to embrace what the real right offers and even if no such alternative is available to them, they may yet find alternatives in Ross Perot, the Libertarian Party, the Taxpayers Party, and other vehicles that are reasonable facsimiles and which come a lot closer than what the two "major parties" offer.

It may be, then, that what we saw in San Diego this summer and what we are seeing now in the race between Huey, Dewey, and Louie is simply the last gasp of a dying political system that is designed to ensure that no alternative and no challenge to the interests it protects can emerge. Unable to attract a mass political following on their own merits, those interests must advance candidates like Mr. Dole, Mr. Kemp, and Mr. Clinton who offer the best counterfeits of the real right they can concoct, and Middle Americans are increasingly biting hard on the currency they peddle to test its real value. It may be that the present two-party domination of national politics is now so exhausted that Middle Americans will soon emerge in their own party with their own agenda and consciousness unencumbered by the trivia and distractions of the major parties. But what ought to have become clear is that this agenda and consciousness cannot be advanced by either the established leadership of the Republican Party or even by the party's right wing that allows itself to be swindled for a meaningless platform that the leadership despises.

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Letter From Vermont

by Arthur F. McGrath III

The Town Meeting

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An annual Vermont tradition occurs on the first Tuesday of March: Town Meeting. It is actually a state holiday; many businesses and all schools and state offices close for the day. This year, as every year since I returned from the Marine Corps, I make the trek from graduate college to home to participate. While I have resided in different towns in recent years, Guildhall, the county seat of Essex in the Northeastern portion of the state, is still home, a permanent fixture in my life.

In the midafternoon I leave Milton, a small town just north of Burlington, Vermont's bustling Metropolis of 40,000. I travel east along U.S. Route 2, a familiar route which cuts across the spine of the state, the Green Mountains. The sun is bright off the snow, and the mountains create beckoning shadows, shadows in which evening's darkness will continue to hide for a few brief hours more. Traffic is light. In the winter, as long as one is away from the ski areas, the vacationers which plague the entire state in the warmer months are for the most part absent. It is one of the few blessings of our bitter winters.

After passing through St. Johnsbury, named in honor of St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, Route 2 becomes even more barren. I am now well into the part of Vermont known as the Northeast Kingdom. It is heavily wooded with few houses, and the towns are small and scattered. I don't see this as a drawback. To me, this is the essence of Vermont, why I still live in a state which sends Bernie Sanders to Congress. One advantage to being in a less populated area is that the roads are actually a little better here, a benefit of having fewer people and less traffic than the rest of Vermont. Soon, around 5:00 P.M., I come into the Essex County seat, Guildhall, many of whose 160 registered voters, out of a population of about 300, are preparing for town meeting at 7:00 P.M. Two-and-one-half hours after leaving Milton, I arrive at my father's house. I eat supper by the woodstove, its heat quite welcome and penetrating. I am reluctant to perform my civic duty, feeling quite content by the stove at this point. However, this is still a free state and I am still a free man. Duty and tradition die hard, especially in the mountains of Vermont, even among adopted Vermonters such as myself. However much Montpelier and Washington would like us to surrender even this power, we are more determined than ever to hold onto it.

I leave for the meeting a few minutes after my father, who is the chairman of the board of selectmen and must arrive early. I leave for the town hall soon after and arrive a few minutes before the meeting starts. The meeting is held in the town hall, known as the Guild Hall. Built in 1794, it has been in constant use ever since, with a few minor renovations which have not affected the building's appearance of age.

After staking my claim to one of the hard wooden chairs for the night, I look around. In the front of the room is a stage; directly in front of that is a long table behind which sit the various town officers: the board of selectmen, the town clerk, and justices of the peace who will count the votes and check people off as they approach the table to cast their ballots. To the left is a fireplace, rarely used. On the mantle is an old clock with the correct time, and above that is a copy of a famous painting of George Washington. The only picture of a President visible is an old photo of Dwight Eisenhower. On another wall is a large, old wooden display board with the battle honor roll from the town. At the top is the list of names from the Civil War, and below are names from the Great War. Nothing more recent. The moderator, Allen Hodgdon (who is also a side, or lay judge for the county) calls the meeting to order. He announces that this is the 211th annual Guildhall Town Meeting and immediately moves to the first order of business, the election of the town officers. This is the core of small-town politics and has been the center of many bitter fights. Tonight is no exception, though the fireworks are subdued. Vermonters are known for being taciturn and reserved, and this is often true even in disagreements.

Two men were nominated for the position. The incumbent, a man with 25 years' service to the town, has been defeated for Selectman only once, and that was by my father nine years ago. In tonight's election he takes nothing for granted, as he did that night, for he has called all the troops out. People who have not been to Town Meeting in years come out of the woodwork to support the incumbent, no doubt at his request. Most of these people leave soon after this first vote, their task being done.

There is no debate or discussion. People quietly write their choice on their ballot and file up to the front of the room. There they vote by depositing their slip into a wooden box while their name is carefully checked off a list by several Justices of the Peace.

While the votes are laboriously counted and recounted, people mill about, some snacking on food in an anteroom which has been prepared for a charity fundraiser being conducted for the Boy Scouts or some other all-too-wholesome cause. Soon, the moderator counts the votes. Forty-one for the incumbent selectman, 28 for the challenger. It will be the most votes cast all evening, and is 15 more votes than had been cast for all presidential candidates combined during the primary voting all day.

Several people speculate privately that the challenger lost because of what seems to be the bane of all modern politics: "negative campaigning," blaming his opponent for all the ills of the town and arguing that only he could correct those ills. Some would merely call that speaking about his opponent's record, but of course that depends entirely on whom one is supporting. Others say he lost because he failed to get his supporters to the Town Meeting to vote.

The only other contest of the evening was for tax collector. The incumbent of many years was defeated by an even wider margin. The incumbent received only 18 votes. After this contest, all the other elected offices are filled with little fanfare or discussion.

After the election of the Town Officers, the next item is the budget. Of interest is a debate over the money appro-

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priated for streetlights. The sum was $2,000. At first it may not seem like much to argue about, but there have been $50 items in the town budget which have caused heated debate. The uncharitable might say that fights are always the bitterest when the stakes are the lowest. I would respond by saying that at least here the voters get to say how their money is spent, unlike in the state or federal budgets or even in towns in those states where there is no town meeting.

The controversy was over who benefited from the streetlights. The majority of the lights are located in Guildhall itself, around the town common. Most residents of Guildhall, however, like most rural towns, are scattered throughout the township on country roads, which have no streetlights at all. Most of the people would not want them anyway. A few streetlights are at intersections, but that is the extent of the town's public lighting. After much debate among a few interested parties—the rest of us wishing they would move on—it was decided that streetlights in the village did benefit the town as a whole by illuminating a rather sharp corner as well as showing off and protecting the town and county buildings. The rest of the budget was subjected to scrutiny as well, but did not cause such interesting debate as the streetlight controversy.

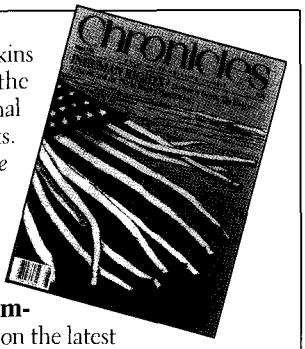
Toward the end of the meeting, two items on the warning, seemingly minor and unconnected at first, caused a furor that I can only describe as hopeful. The first item was a proposal to elect town officers by "Australian ballot." The second item concerned a possible bicycle and walking path along Route 102. To many, the objection to "Australian ballots" will be immediately evident. It has been called the death knell of active voter participation and of town meetings in many communities. The election of town officers is what draws the most people to the town meeting; without it, voter turnout would be lower than it is already. This was pointed out by many people, people who obviously cared about the institution of town meeting, and when the votes were cast, the vast majority of us voted against expedience and went with tradition.

The second item I mentioned concerned a bike path to be put along Route 102, the main highway through the town. The path was to be made with state and federal funds. Just why the federal government is spending money on bike paths is unclear. Perhaps this is Vermont's reward for its cowardly surrender to the Department of Transportation on the seatbelt issue several years ago, in contrast to neighboring New Hampshire, which still keeps its dignity to this day by not passing a mandatory seatbelt law. In any case, all the town was being asked to do was give its nod to the study being done on the bike path. When it would be done, or whether the town would have to contribute money, was not specified. The whole thing seemed absurd, especially federal funds toward such a project. Guildhall decided that they would give no aid nor nod of approval to this project. It could end at the town line and continue on the other side for all we cared, though in actuality the path, if approved by the state, would probably be completed no matter what we decided. The town was still going to try to maintain some kind of control, or at least not cooperate while Montpelier and Washington decided what our roads would look like. Just as with the "Australian ballot" question, the voters agreed to keep as much direct power as possible, even in a seemingly minor matter.

The meeting ends around 11:00 P.M., and home I will go to sit again by the woodstove with my father and aunt. We discuss the events of the evening and enjoy the heat of the stove. I will not go back to the Burlington area until the next morning, for the abundance of moose in northern Vermont has made night driving especially dangerous. Not anxious to leave, I am glad for this chance to sit and reflect, still a citizen and free, despite the best efforts of politicians and bureaucrats.

Arthur F. McGrath III writes from Winooski.

GREAT TOPICS, GREAT ISSUES



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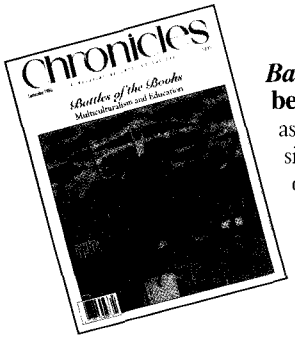

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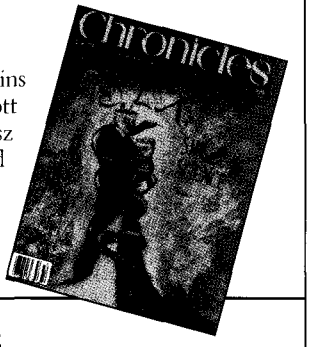

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POLITICS

Mailer, Breslin, Thompson, and Stern

by Jesse Walker

There has never been an election conducted above the local level in which one single ballot determined the outcome. And even if there were, I doubt it would matter. Suppose you could cast the deciding vote in a contest between Bill Clinton and Bob Dole. Can you honestly say that you would bother?

Visiting the polls is more a religious act than a political one, an affirmation of one's fealty toward America's civic faith. This confession does not stress individual revelation and one's personal relationship with the Deity; nor does it express a communal identity through mystery and pageantry—though it sometimes tries. The point of this church is to show up most Sundays and try not to fall asleep.

Creative voters often try to transcend the bland affirmations of the Civic Church. They may embrace a splinter cult—a protest campaign or a third party. They may go pagan, and write in their own gods: Faustus Kelly, Randy Weaver, Donald Duck, or whoever strikes their fancy on the spur of the moment. The best of them become self-made prophets and enter the race themselves, on their own terms. These holy men constitute a religious tradition in their own right, an esoteric order that only occasionally slips, partially, into the spotlight.

The last time this happened was in 1994, when infamous radio personality Howard Stern earned (some say, stole) the gubernatorial nomination of the New York Libertarian Party. His platform consisted of reinstating the death penalty, using criminals' corpses to fill potholes, "staggering tollbooths" (whatever that means), and resigning after three weeks. Across the land, pundits asked, "Is this a joke?"

Well, yes and no. It was not a joke in the sense of Canada's Rhino Party, which advocated turning the entire private sector over to the public sector and vice versa, or the mid-60's Hamiltonian Party, a wholly imaginary group led by a Flint, Michigan, college freshman who called himself "Mike, Mighty Man of God." Unlike the Rhinos and Hamiltonians, Stern seemed to believe at least most of his slim platform. Nor was it a joke in the way Bill Clinton or George Bush or Bob Dole is a joke. Stern, at least, *meant* to be funny. No, Howard Stern's campaign was a dead-serious jape, an *electoral prank*. And this placed him squarely in the Tradition.

In 1969, Normal Mailer ran for mayor of New York City on a Paul Goodmanesque platform of radical decentralization and community control: neighborhood sovereignty for black militants and right-wing ethnics alike, and city-wide secession from New York State. Cars would be banned from Manhattan, gangs would fight formalized jousting matches in Central Park, and everyone would celebrate "Sweet Sunday"—one day a month when, in Mailer's words, "New York would stop for 24 hours. Everything would stop running. Electricity, cars, planes, trains, name it. If nothing else, it would give New York a chance to clear itself once a month. And people would hear themselves think for a change."

Jimmy Breslin ran for City Council president as Mailer's running mate, and—paralleling Stern's Libertarian candidacy—the pair gained the endorsement of Murray Rothbard's tiny Radical Libertarian Alliance. Other than that, most of their unconsiderable support came from the left.

A year later, gonzo journalist Hunter Thompson ran for sheriff of Aspen on a "Freak Power" ticket, promising to sod the streets, put dishonest drug dealers in stocks, rename the town "Fat City," and crack down on the developers he felt were raping his Colorado home. His was not the only tongue-in-cheek countercultural campaign that year; hippies and yippies across the country were running for municipal or county office. But Thompson did something none of them (or Mailer or Breslin) could manage: he *almost won*. He carried the city, losing only because of the "Spiro Agnew vote" (his phrase) in the suburbs.

Perhaps the greatest of the jape campaigns came in 1979, when punk rocker Jello Biafra ran for mayor of San Francisco. Biafra, then frontman for the Dead Kennedys, called for "bringing government out from behind closed doors" by auctioning off high city positions publicly rather than in smoke-filled rooms. He also wanted to legalize squatting in any building left empty for a tax write-off, require downtown businessmen to wear clown suits between nine and five, rehire laid-off public employees as panhandlers at 50 percent commission, make police officers stand for election, and create a Board of Bribery to set standard rates.

He finished a solid fourth in a field of ten, with 3.5 percent of the vote. The victorious Dianne Feinstein admitted he "made the race more interesting." Her campaign manager added that if someone "like that" could do so well, "this city is in big trouble." (Some of us feel that way about Feinstein.)

To some extent, this Tradition is self-conscious. Biafra, for example, has admitted being inspired by another campaign buccaneer: "In my hometown [Boulder] there was a history of people pulling stunts like that. In particular there was a man named John Davenport, a 50-year-old independently wealthy hippie who would run for city council advocating all kinds of weird things. Everybody else would appear in their suit-and-tie photos for the candidates' profiles in the newspaper, and he'd be in a pirate's suit with an eyepatch and some of his teeth blacked out. He wrote great letters to the editor, attacking the cops."

None of these people really expected to win; even Thompson started his candidacy on a lark. Mailer publicly stated that it would take "a miracle" for him to emerge the victor. This freed them, not only to push radical ideas that make more sense as poetry than as policy proposals—calling for a "Sweet Sunday" makes a fine satiric point, but surely Mailer did not really want to shut the

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city hospitals down for 24 hours a month—but to be brutally honest in a way no "serious" politician ever can. To quote Mailer and Breslin's campaign slogan, these are campaigns with *No bull-sh-t*.

So Mailer and Breslin were on the level about overthrowing the city bureaucracy and restoring power to the neighborhoods. Thompson was dead set on stopping the gentrification of Aspen. Biafra was out to show up the local corporate-state interests and to make fun of the police. Stern's was a populist thrust at the two most common complaints about life in New York: crime on the streets, and the streets themselves.

And that is why this invisible college is, if not important in its own right, at least more significant than the soul-less civic faith it challenges. Even if Stern had not dropped out of the race, he would not have been elected governor. He *would* have gathered a lot of votes, though—not so much from people who like the death penalty and hate potholes as from those who think that Stern is funny and the other candidates are slime. After all, what does "don't waste your vote" mean, if not "do something special with it"?

Jesse Walker is assistant editor of Liberty *magazine.*

Forbes–Funded Marxism

by Todd Seavey

Steve Forbes may not have won the Republican presidential nomination, but the Forbes millions are helping to shape the political culture of Brown University. The Forbes Foundation donated $2 million to Brown's most Marxist department, Modern Culture and Media.

When Tim Forbes announced the donation in 1991, just as I was graduating from Brown, the irony of the notoriously capitalist family giving money to the department was obvious to everyone at Brown. Even at this very liberal Ivy League school, MCM was often considered a leftist joke. That's something, since it took a lot of effort to stand out as politically absurd at Brown. Relativism was a basic assumption of most humanities classes and many students dressed as hippies over 20 years after Woodstock. The Brown student mentioned in *The Bonfire of the Vanities* who never heard of hippies is an impossibility—going to Brown in the 1980's, he would have met hundreds.

Even in that milieu, MCM was special. Valued by most students mainly for its film production courses, MCM was also one of American academia's great strongholds of deconstructionism, the French-spawned brand of film/literary theory that uses relativism—and just plain intellectual inconsistency—to weave together radical feminism, Freudianism, and hardcore Marxism. MCM was notorious for black-clad, pseudointellectual students, jargon-filled texts (hermeneutic patriarchal signifiers, etc.), and professors who humorlessly denounced all capitalism. One such professor, Duncan Smith, even wrote of the relief he felt when driving from West to East Berlin, escaping the crush of commercialism.

Deconstructionists spend most of their energy attacking Western capitalism, but the odds are they would hate—and attack—the foundations of any society of which they were members. The *reductio ad absurdum* of Enlightenment rationalism, deconstructionism treats every belief as suspect, every tradition as oppressive, and every idea that was not the conscious product of ideology as a sort of evil subliminal command to be rooted out and destroyed. No functioning society—of necessity a thing built on history, tradition, implicit assumptions, and market transactions—could ever be satisfactory to deconstructionists. Those civilizations that do exist must be subverted, through calculatedly strange art, scathing political criticism of anything insufficiently egalitarian, and film studies classes that treat all conventional movies as propaganda. Forbes' money now aids this cultural mission—or anticultural mission.

I returned to Brown at the end of the '95-96 school year for my five-year class reunion. I had abandoned my plan to wear my "Forbes for President" button to the reunion when Steve Forbes dropped out of the race (go ahead and call me a neocon—at least he talked about shrinking government and instituting school choice). The Forbes name was present elsewhere at Brown, though. Tim Forbes was being awarded an honorary degree, five years after the MCM donation. And the new, snazzier MCM building bears the legend: "Malcolm S. Forbes Center, Department of Modern Culture and Media." While visiting the building, I wondered if the Forbes money had worked any magical ideological transformation on the department. I noticed that in this bastion of feminism, some thoughtless perpetuator of patriarchy had left a toilet seat up. Beyond that, the most striking thing about the new building was the fancier, upgraded production equipment it housed.

When the donation was first announced, members of the department downplayed the seriousness of the ideological divide between the communist sympathizers at MCM and America's most notorious family of "capitalist tools." Moreover, since communism's collapse, Brown has backpedaled a bit on its enthusiasm for socialism. Course catalogues that a year or two earlier had touted courses' "Marxist perspectives" now advertised "postcommunist" and "postmodernist" perspectives.

The changing political times and the new production equipment will probably hasten MCM's move toward emphasizing filmmaking instead of arcane theory. What students tend to want most out of the department is the praxis they can put to use in film school or in the nonacademic world. As Ali Kokmen (Brown class of 1992), who majored in MCM and now works with a New York City book publisher, puts it: "I suppose spending my college years in the MCM department wasn't a total waste of time, but I'm thankful I've gotten better."

The theory wears off. It should not be lightly dismissed, though. Deconstructionism—if only because of its extremism and the fundamental nature of its assault on civilization—was the philosophy to which I most felt the need to *respond* in college. As such, it probably helped inspire me, initially an English major, to pick up philosophy as a second major, and as intellectual self-defense. Having the deconstructionists' complaints and the standards of academic philosophy in the back of my mind has, I think, helped keep me from being complacent in my views and kept me from being satisfied with the pat, often smug answers of mainstream conservatism.

I cannot blame paleoconservatives for being suspicious when capitalist millions flow—seemingly without regard to political and cultural consequences—to people dedicated to the undermining of the

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very system that made the accumulation of those millions possible. Places like Harvard are still thought of as staid, conservative institutions by much of the general populace (and by aged alumni), but Harvard also produced the Unabomber, with help from Berkeley and Montana. The Ivy League has become a strange and wealthy ideological playground, and people concerned with preserving civilization (such as, say, Tim Forbes, editor of *American Heritage* magazine, or a man who wanted to be President) ought to watch carefully how the family fortune is spent by such institutions.

True, Steve Forbes can hardly be expected to watch every dime himself, and I would not want him to be so culturally uptight that we were robbed of entertaining moments such as him introducing the militant black band Rage Against the Machine on *Saturday Night Live*. And admittedly—as Steve Forbes must be well aware after his campaign—mainstream media are more dangerous to the culture than obscure Marxist critics. Still, a glance at the MCM textbooks in the Brown Bookstore should suffice to show there is something *wrong* with the Forbes media empire aiding MCM. When I examined the shelves on my reunion visit, typical textbooks included *Black Skin, White Masks* by Frantz Fanon, the socialist whose inclusion in Stanford's notorious Western Civilization survey bumped John Locke from the lineup; Michael T. Taussig's *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*, with a quotation on the back cover calling the book "superb ethnography, a Marxist critique of world capitalism, a lesson in analogical and dialectical techniques (some of them bordering on the mystical)"; Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, Volume 1; and, perhaps most ironically (given Steve Forbes' anti-communist radio work under Reagan), *Cuban-American Radio Wars*, a book which criticizes Voice of America, noting that "In the United States, the paragon of the liberal tradition, the interests of the minority elite classes are paramount and are safeguarded by a representational structure favoring those classes."

Perhaps the book is correct, but if donations to the MCM department are any indication, those elite classes are not being too farsighted about preserving their own social system.

Todd Seavey writes from New York City.

FILM

Mondo Quasimodo

by Marian Kester Coombs

Last June, the 19,000 delegates to the Southern Baptist Convention voted to boycott the Walt Disney Company for its "promotion of homosexuality" and the other "anti-family" values. The convention pointed to Gay and Lesbian Days sponsored by Disney theme parks; to such twisted fare as *Priest*, *Powder*, and *Kids*, all films produced by Disney's Miramax; to such books as *Growing Up Gay*, published by Disney's Hyperion subsidiary; and to the company's granting of marital-type benefits to homosexual employees' partners.

President Clinton, a "lifelong Southern Baptist," promptly had his mouthpiece mouth the usual objection: "He doesn't agree with that particular position. That doesn't change his faith or membership in that denomination." While the two segments of this statement are typical Clinton in their mutual exclusivity, it does not follow that Clinton really is on both sides of every either/or. In his actions, at least, Clinton always favors the immoral, amoral, and abnormal. At this late stage of the game, it is no longer possible to put into words what is wrong with the Clintons and their associates. It is a wrongness so fundamental that one either grasps it profoundly, intuitively, or one cannot be brought to grasp it at all. This sense of wrongness beyond words has begun to define a physical boundary between the America of our fathers and another, entirely incompatible one.

More illuminating was Disney's retort to the Baptists, which justified the benefits policy as necessary in view of the intense competition for top talent in the entertainment industry. Thus it would seem that Disney equates "top talent" with homosexuality. This may begin to explain why the company's attitude toward society has changed so markedly.

Compared with the toxic products of most studios, the creations of the Disney Company always seemed righteous, upright, and wholesome, at least until the consolidation of the new executive powers that captured the company after Walt Disney's death. Each time Michael Eisner introduces himself on television as "chairman of the Disney Company," he appears to dance a little jig on Walt's grave and toast himself with a draught out of Walt's skull. Conservative, traditionalist, and pro-family critics have looked on in dismay as the old playful, good-hearted Disney anarcho-cosmic subversion—Four Legs Good/Two Legs Bad (*Bambi*), Underdog Good/Overman Bad (*Dumbo*), Red Man Good/White Man Bad (*Tonka*), Children Good/Stepparents Bad (*Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *The Sleeping Beauty*)—has marched further and further astray, rewriting classic literature as it goes.

In 1987's *The Little Mermaid*, Ariel gives up her family, identity, and environment, literally becoming a "fish out of water" to pursue her infatuation with Prince Eric. The mer-folk are shown ignorantly demonizing the land-dwelling humans, like a bunch of Texas skinheads disparaging Mexicans, while Ariel persists in dreamily championing humans despite the pain this causes her father, the ruler of the sea. Though the original Andersen tale ends with the protracted death of the mermaid, out of her element and condemned to watch her beloved marry another human, in the Disney version Ariel turns her back on her native ocean and switches species by magic. In 1993's *Beauty and the Beast*, it is not the father who opposes Belle's love for the Beast, but the traditional community of townsfolk led by tall, handsome, vigorous Gaston, who in a classical fable would have been Belle's natural match. There exists no such character in the 18th-century *La Belle et la bête*; he has been added both to rub in Belle's rejection of a natural match and to be the "dumb and dumber" butt of her sarcastic feminism.

There are many interpretations of *Beauty and the Beast*, and many meanings, no doubt, to the tale. One thing it does symbolize is the need for nubile girls to overcome their fear of men, to recognize the human tenderness that lurks beneath the alien, sometimes frightening exterior of the male. The Disney version focuses not on this leap of faith but on Belle's preference for a "monstrous" mate over a (despicably) "normal" one. For this is the new specialty of Disney films: the subversion of

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that most important of choices, the marriage decision. It was once axiomatic that, since *Similia simili gaudet*, the wisest course was for like to marry like, for the background of your spouse to resemble your own to foster a harmonious, empathetic marriage. The widespread violation of this common-sense axiom in recent decades is surely one of the reasons for our extremely high divorce rates. Yet the Disney canon has reveled more and more in pitting parent against child anent this most crucial decision, and reveled still more in bestowing victory upon the wayward know-it-all child.

In Disney's recent *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, the artistic reality of the Hugo novel has been snatched, and not merely revised, but replaced. Minister Frollo is obsessed with eliminating the Gypsy presence from Paris. He is a piety-mouthing hypocrite who is capable of any cruelty in the name of law and order. Quasimodo is his prisoner in the bell-tower of Notre Dame, brainwashed into believing he is a "monster" who can never participate in the outside world. The link between Quasimodo and the Gypsies is explicit. "I'm not—normal," sadly explains Q to his gyrating gargoyle pals Victor, Hugo, and Laverne. Just as Q is far more sympathetic a character than that champion of normality, Frollo, so the Gypsies are shown to be unjustly maligned, innocent outcasts who pray for God's help for "people who are different" while the "straight" Christians bay instead for riches, fame, and glory.

Esmeralda is a beautiful aquamarine-eyed Gypsy girl who dances like a houri but is pure, even frigid at heart. She entrances the foul Frollo, who vows to have her even if all Paris has to burn. She also wins Quasimodo's heart, and, in perhaps the film's weirdest scene, a production number worthy of *Springtime for Hitler*, the gargoyles egg him on to believe he could win her, too. Meanwhile, Captain Phoebus has come to Paris from the provincial wars as Minister Frollo's second-in-command. Looking exactly like the Disney John Smith of *Pocahontas*, Phoebus reprises the Smith role of blond sap set up to lure the audience into the film's agenda, another eye-rolling, jive-talking stooge for the relentless *ressentiment* of the outcasts, who convert him to their side in no time flat. Phoebus, voiced by Kevin Kline, and Esmeralda, voiced by Demi Moore, are the most obnoxiously modern pair of smart aleck lovers yet hatched by Disney. Sample repartee: "You handle a sword well—for a woman." "Funny, I was just going to tell you the same thing."

All the action comes to a head on "Topsy Turvy Day," Disneyspeak for those pagan/peasant festivals of "the world turned upside down" that set servant over master for a day. To Disney, however, every day should crown the clown king; cartoon anarchy should reign supreme, not merely leaven the daily bread won of toil, tears, sweat, and blood. Disney affects to want a society dedicated to the Gypsy *Prinzip*, but Gypsies do not build societies, they parasitize them, at best colorfully and entertainingly; and their "Christianity," contrary to the Disney fantasy, is far more Haitian than Parisian, or so all civilizations familiar with real Gypsies have concluded.

Victor Hugo's novel has much in common with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which preceded it by 13 years. Each seems to be an inescapably tragic vision of the outsider's longing for love and assimilation. While the reader's heart may be rent by the pathetic account, these great novels do not shrink from hard truth. Only death pacifies the longing for what cannot be. Disney's *Hunchback* must have it both ways, of course, feeding Frollo to the demons of Hell, wrapping Phoebus and Esmeralda in each other's arms and sending Quasimodo happily off to play with some children, as if that will compensate for never knowing Esmeralda's love. A happy, Disney-fied ending, it would seem.

To Paul Goldberger of the *New York Times*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* "is merely the latest and most spectacular evidence of how our popular culture is literally devouring itself, a maw that grinds all in its path into a form of commercial entertainment." Disney "doesn't seem to believe that audiences can handle pain, or hard edges, or ambiguity. [The film is] not high culture, with its tradition of complexity and ambiguity; yet it isn't quite pure, just-for-fun pop culture, either. Maybe we should call it Disingenuous Culture."

Goldberger's critique is insightful but does not go far enough. The sentimentalized ending is not the principal subversion intended by Disney. There is a clear direction, an agenda to the recent Disney *oeuvre*, and it merely uses literature (and history) for "name recognition," to provide both hook and cover to sell its propaganda. And we continue to buy because, borne on the momentum of the expressive and technical breakthroughs made by earlier generations of artists, musicians, storytellers, and lyricists, Disney can surf that ebbing inertial wave with style. *Hunchback*'s score, reminiscent of *Mary Poppins* and *Beauty and the Beast*, is well crafted, and the computer-enhanced animation is gripping; the credits list literally hundreds of animators, assistants, roughness inbetweeners, cleanup artists, visual effects animators, computer and digital technicians, scene planners, checkers, color stylists, painters, compositors, editors of every sort, choreographers, technical managers, Foley artists, production assistants, etc., etc. (no mention of Victor Hugo).

The principal subversion is not the happy ending, but the stylized hatred of straight, mainstream, adult society. Back when actual adults were in charge, this vision of kids in control, of the inmates taking over the asylum, was a harmless distraction. But now look who's president. And look at the ugly chaos spreading throughout the school system and wherever else youth congregates; nihilism is no longer just a cartoon.

What next for Disney? The trajectory is only too calculable. If Beauty can marry the Beast, if Princess Jasmine can marry a street Arab, if the minister is a monster and the monster a mensch, surely *Lord of the Flies* is ripe for a remake. Rewrite the bits biased against the pig's-head brotherhood, leave out those grownups showing up and spoiling the fun in the end. Or perhaps the heart-warming tale of two gay mice (one black, one white) living and loving in Greenwich Village.

Then there is the temporarily stalled project to build "Disney's America," a sort of virtual reality Washington, D.C. After the professional wrecking crew at Disney gets finished with our national history, Pocahontasizing the European encounter with Amerindians, deleting the stubborn ambiguities of the slave system (just as the classic *Song of the South* has vanished from the Disney canon), setting noble animatronic FDRs and Bill Clintons to preside over the "progressive" version of America, extolling the joys of unlimited immigration with an "It's A Small World" gala, the body of our past will have been truly snatched. Now that Disney has bought Capital Cities/ABC for $18.8 billion, making it for the moment second only to the Time Warner/Turner giga-entity as the world's largest entertainment conglomerate, the

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Eisner Empire wields still more unholy global power to turn its fantasies into our realities. Lock up your sons and daughters.

Marian Kester Coombs writes from Crofton, Maryland.

PASTIMES

Toy Story

by Alan Pell Crawford

As federal cannon boom from the smoky ridge to the west, a rebel foot soldier darts through underbrush, scrambles over a fence and crouches warily behind a tree. Raising his rifle to fire, he takes a volley of grape-shot in the chest. Tumbling, tragically, from the coffee table, he lands on the floor among the pirate Legos and Playmobile knights.

Retrieved to fight another day, the otherwise admirable Southern infantryman is found to possess an unsettling flaw. His face has been gnawed away (by a farm dog last petted in 1961), a hideous abnormality which lowers him in the esteem of four-year-old Ned who has inherited the small gray infantryman from his dad.

Still worse (cynical papa notes with sarcasm), the Confederate rifleman will not command a tidy sum if put on the open market at one of the so-called toy shows now conducted at fairgrounds and convention centers. Evidently, the plastic Civil War soldiers of my boyhood have become—horrid word—"collectibles." So, apparently, are figures of Davy Crockett, Johnny Tremain, and just about anybody who, in the 1950's and 1960's, had his own television show. (This cast of immortals, so help me, includes Fred Flintstone.)

There is something unsettling, perhaps unsettled, about a society that so readily turns the playthings of its immediate past into objects of unwarranted reverence—or, worse yet, campy condescension. It cannot speak well for the maturity of our adult males that they feel such need to revisit the outward and visible signs of their own innocence and amass them in collections.

Collecting, we have it on good authority, is a hobby. Hobbies are forms of recreation, and regular engagement in recreation has become one of the most solemn duties of what credentialed experts in such matters consider a healthy, well-adjusted life. As our society has taken recreation more and more seriously, however, it is rapidly losing all sense of play—and an appreciation for the proper role of playthings.

Children, happily, have not suffered such a loss, and grownups should leave well enough alone, for the good of the children as well as our society. Children only start "collections" at the encouragement of well-meaning, but perhaps misguided, adults, as evidence of baseball cards suggests. The baseball cards of true baseball fans are never in "mint condition" and have absolutely no market value. They are wrinkled and worn from heedless play and—to the adult way of thinking—worthless.

So it is with toy soldiers, which are now traded in like cattle futures. The speculators in such commodities are men in their 40's, many of whom have children of their own. These tykes are no doubt forbidden to go anywhere near Daddy's little treasures, lest they defile the sacred objects by unsupervised handling. Surely other children are shooed away simply to protect resale value.

Glenn Garvin in the *Miami Herald* reports that a 35-year-old Alamo playset goes for $1,000 these days. Comedian Robin Williams is said to have stockpiled 20,000 toy figures, some of which could easily be worth $75 a piece.

I hope I am not alone in my dismay at seeing Davy Crockett and his trusty sidekick Georgie Russell bought and sold like so many junk bonds. These are not, mind you, finely crafted metal soldiers of the sort cherished by sherry-saturated Lord Emsworths who live in musty English country houses and gabble endlessly about their exploits in the Crimea. Crudely crafted, mass-merchandised gobs of low-density polyethylene, they often were not even thoughtfully designed.

In the late 1950's, Marx and Co., the leader in the field, "was so desperate to get an Alamo playset into stores that it didn't even wait for its factories to start spitting out Mexican soldiers," Garvin writes. "In an unparalleled act of historical revisionism, the first Alamo sets featured Texas against *Indians*."

Marx practiced recycling well before the rest of us took up that noble cause. Pioneers who defended Fort Apache from the Indians "fought the Mexicans at the Alamo," Garvin reports. "And the gray plastic Confederates in the Marx Civil War sets, when recast in blue, became George Custer's 7th Cavalry at the Little Big Horn."

Such figures litter the battlefields of my own son's room, where they are allowed to mix it up as their inheritor wishes, in a sort of military monster rally or Strong Man Contest. Dinosaurs from the Eisenhower Epoch (which followed the Cretaceous Period) are not barred from the competition—by meddlesome adults, anyway.

Ned, on his own, referees their dust-ups with a greater sense of historical nicety than the marketing department of Marx and Co. exhibited in its zeal to push product. Dinosaurs prey only on each other and never charge into the frozen wastes of the Pleistocene, much less attempt to breathe the mists of Avalon.

Father and son have recently added one competitor to these contests, a knight whose services are secured for $1.75 from an old-toy bazaar at the exhibition hall at our local fairgrounds. We wander about the hanger-like building, inspecting the tiny covered wagons, castles and other oddments until Ned asks, "Daddy, when does the toy show start?"

No doubt expecting a curtain to rise and Chuck E. Cheese-like robots to lip-sync "Teddy Bear," he seems not especially disappointed to learn that this gussied-up garage sale *is* the toy show. After a long last look in the cardboard box of mismatched figures in which we had found the knight, we make our way to the exit.

Before we leave, a tattooed refugee from a Biker Club in a stall displaying World Wrestling Federation "action figures," calls Ned over and hands him a free trading card bearing the likeness of Randy "Macho Man" Savage. To Dad's immense relief, Ned has no idea who "Macho Man" is and shows no interest in him whatsoever. Tonight, to celebrate, we watch "Swamp Fox."

Alan Pell Crawford, author of Thunder on the Right: The New Right and the Politics of Resentment, *is senior counselor at Martin Public Relations in Richmond, Virginia.*

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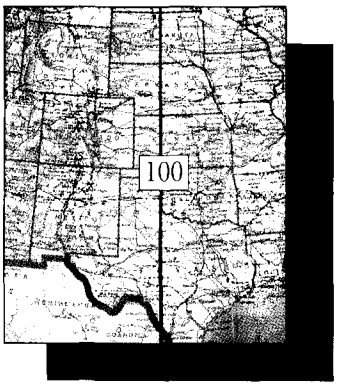
by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

The Perfect Life



It is possibly a good thing that more writers are not sportsmen and outdoorsmen. The relationship between art and sport is a complexly curious one, since a case can be made for a sporting element in writing that is, of course, wholly cerebral (though not necessarily noncompetitive and nonviolent). In writing, as in the nonliterary arts, the artist, like the true sportsman, quickly discovers his chief adversary to be himself; not, like the hunter's quarry, the elusiveness of the artistic ideal. Also like the sincere sportsman, the dedicated artist-sportsman, or sporting artist, understands that the final object of all his striving and attention is not the ostensible one but something beyond it: the apprehension of material and spiritual realities accessible only through ritual, and art. This truth, which was undoubtedly known to the prehistoric hunter-artists who created the cave paintings in the south of France, has been largely forgotten by modern writers and hunters ("sportsmen"), who in recent times have divided themselves into tribes so alien to one another that they have difficulty in recognizing themselves as fellow human beings. Hemingway, when he is not being taught as an example of closeted fag literary genius, is dismissed as a "hunter-writer." And while contemporary successors to earlier hunter-writers like Fenimore Cooper, Theodore Roosevelt, William Faulkner, and Hemingway do exist, they find themselves increasingly at professional risk when they attempt to mix their twin identities in their work: exteriorly by a literary establishment that regards blood sports as beneath the dignity of literary persons, interiorly by the temptation of technique in a world that regards challenge and technique as all.

I encounter occasionally people—always hunters and sportsmen, never fellow writers—convinced that mine is the Perfect Life. From their viewpoint, I spend the larger part of my time in doing the things I like most to do—hunting, riding, camping, exploring wilderness, and traveling—and earn my living writing about these things, almost in my spare time. I have no desire to complain of my life, to which I am attached and which I do, truthfully, live pretty much as I would wish to live it. It needs to be pointed out, however, that enviers see it only partially and back-to-front, since it would be far more accurate to say that I spend a relatively small part of that life acquiring the experience that provides me with the subject for my work, while devoting the much greater part to the attempt to give that experience a reality beyond what it had in the first place.

For the confirmed writer, nothing that he has ever seen or known is finally real until he has written it up—heightening, embellishing, and even fictionalizing where necessary, energizing and constraining by style; translating experience into art—and set it down on the printed page. Nations, regions, peoples, cities; friends, enemies, and lovers; fears, and hopes: none of these truly exists for the writer until he has had his way with it imaginatively and recreatively—only, more likely than not, to put it behind him forever. This is intended neither as a confession nor a boast, but simply as a statement of fact: the central fact, indeed, of the poor, arguably perverse, writerly life.

Its implication for the sporting writer is that he must, if he is to be the best he can at his art, make the conscious decision to ordinate art and sport, which is to say, to subordinate one of them to the other. And if he is a true and sincere artist, there will be no doubt in his mind as to which the subordinate activity, or commitment, will be. In this respect, nothing could be more untrue or unfair than to reproach Ernest Hemingway as a hunter-writer, by which his critics mean to suggest that he was something less than a literary artist, rather a kind of mental mongrel. While nearly all of his life away from his writing table was concerned with the chase in one form or another, as a writer Hemingway never forgot that he was trying to write for the ages, not for men in barbershops thumbing the latest *Field & Stream*. This is only another way of saying that for Hemingway the true subject of *Green Hills of Africa* was not the hunt, and *The Old Man and the Sea* is not a fish story. Hemingway, though as much concerned with technique in sport, whether the "sport" in question was wing-shooting or the bullfight, as in writing, was not concerned with it at the same level, never permitting the technique of sport either to obtrude on or to become the subject of his work, as lesser sportsmen-writers have always been inclined to do. (It is true that his characters' concern for technique, like Hemingway's own, frequently points toward a deeper-lying concern with something else.)

While subordination is always required the degree of it is never fixed, not itself a question of technique but of artistry, which makes it essentially a personalized and individualistic adjustment. Faulkner, who spent his hunting trips to the Mississippi river bottoms listening to his companions talk while he (and they) drank, often without ever firing his rifle, wrote a very different sort of hunting story than Hemingway's. (Compare, for instance, "The Bear" with "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" or "Big Two-Hearted River.") With Faulkner, the hunt itself is made still more subordinate to the natural and social settings, as well as to the central theme of the work. For him, the reality of the hunt was the totality of the experience, lying well beyond the stalk, the range, the kill, the weighing up and measuring out.

There is a sense in which the greatest sporting feat makes the least complete and satisfying literature, for the reason that the relatively narrow accomplishment tends to overwhelm the completeness of the larger experience. Modern writers in particular have been aware of the artistic dangers that result from an interest in what is exceptional at the expense of the usual (though James Joyce,

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when drunk, used to beg Hemingway to tell him if his work were not "awfully suburban"). Ten years ago, I gave up reading the hunting magazines when it occurred to me that taking an eight-by-eight bull elk is intrinsically of no greater import than shooting a spike unless of course you happen to be a professional hunter, in which case you probably have scant interest (when it comes to writing up the story anyway) in how the cold felt when you got out of your bedroll that morning, the way first light seemed to have been breathed from the dark mountains, and the symbolic investment of your trophy. Certainly taking an eight-point mule deer requires much more knowledge, finesse, and stamina than taking a three-point does, and as a hunter I acknowledge and respect knowledge, cunning, and strength. But as a professional writer, I am just not all that impressed. Maybe it is because I am not helped. Besides which, I can turn three points to eight with five taps on the typewriter keys.

Anyone involved with sports knows plenty of sportsmen, and anyone knowing other sportsmen knows the tedium of being lectured on technique, and the latest technology developed to further it. The other weekend, dropping the horses off at a friend's paddock overnight, I was waylaid by the boyfriend of the friend, who insisted on rehearsing for me, at length, the utility of a new and different type of cross-buck, used to transport big game on horseback. I listened, but I wasn't interested, and I didn't listen very well. In fact, I cannot recall the name of the cross-buck, or what was supposed to be special about it. I solved years ago—for myself—the problem of how best to bring game from the mountains by buying a set of nylon panniers that fit over the saddle and a spider to hold them and the saddle in place on the horse; and I have no interest, whether intellectual or practical, in alternative means, which could only distract me from an appreciation of what I find significant and pleasurable in the experience of hunting elk. What is the use of solving a logistical problem in a way that is perfectly satisfying to you, if you are going to keep mulling alternative possibilities in your mind, and then go and try out some of them? The answer I suppose is a lot, if you happen to like gadgets and technology. But beyond the bolt-action rifle and the four-wheel-drive I am interested in neither, and don't want to hear about them; gadgets, like prizes, being for little boys.

An avid fly-fisherman himself, Tom Fleming remarks that writers have no need of hobbies. His point is that hobbies are inherently as jealous as women and book critics; while writing, in one sense a kind of *ur*-hobby, benefits neither from competition nor distraction. Every hobby has its own technique, and the problem for the writer is less one of limited time and capacity to master several techniques than it is the limitations to his general enthusiasm, and also his ability to maintain various enthusiasms in balance. Moreover, if by hobbies one means gluing fragmentary parts of ship models together, or collecting stamps, or playing tournament golf, then the writer indeed needs none of these, activities of this sort being fundamentally exercises in self-removal—the state in which authors spend their entire working lives. What the literary man away from his work table requires above all is contact with the concrete world, and the best way for him to find it is in ritual forms of physical activity performed in a natural setting and in the company of his closest, most trusted friends, male or female. Michael Novak has extolled the joy of sports, by which he means team sports, and John Updike probably walks away from the half-finished page to shoot baskets. But what have mere games to offer the already experientially underprivileged writer, and what does a writer want with competition anyway? If he is a wise man instead of a jealous one, pious rather than envious, he must know that his is the least competitive of all trades, his sole competitors—if any—being dead men. The Greeks, who began the mania for competitive sports, have much to answer for on this score. As do the overseers of the playing fields of Eton, where the scions of the aristocracy would have been better instructed in giving the enemy the bayonet direct than in silly cricket and stupid rugby.

"It's a challenge!" people say, in this age of profound mass boredom induced by corporate careers and suburban living, as well as by trivial jobs that lack so much as the dignified physical exertion of scrubbing the floor. But, even if the challenge is actually a challenge, is it really worth meeting it?

It seems to me that a good test of the inherent worth of a thing or activity might be: Is it worth writing about? Putting this test to work, one could ask whether war, an engine of catastrophic destruction and misery, may nevertheless be a significant endeavor? War, Hemingway thought, is the best subject for a writer, an opinion in which he is supported by many of the great works of literature from ancient times to the present: *The Iliad*, *War and Peace*, *The Red Badge of Courage* . . . *A Farewell to Arms*. Since a work of art can be finally no greater than its subject, we may conclude that war, horrific as it is, may nevertheless be a worthy human enterprise, which was the meaning of R.E. Lee's remark at Fredericksburg, that it is a good thing that war is so terrible, else we should grow too fond of warfare.

Similarly, one might inquire if repairing your car should be considered a significant activity of intrinsic merit. Since repair manuals, except at community colleges, do not count as literature; since to my knowledge the only work on the subject ever acclaimed as literature is *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (a book I never read, but which I doubt is really about maintaining motorcycles); since, finally, I cannot imagine reading—or writing—a literarily satisfying account of replacing a U-joint on my Ford pickup truck, I have to conclude that auto repair work is neither significant nor intrinsically important. The argument that, absent the U-joint, the entire drive-train will drop out of the truck, rendering it both dangerous and unfit for further service, is not a valid objection, as it implies that the automobile is of significant value to humanity, and to human civilization.

To return to the sportsman-writer, his life and his work. The artistic temperament is likely to insist on the importance of technique in every activity, not just its own particular art, and also of the challenge to which technique is applicable. This is why Thomas McGuane takes pride in training cutting horses as well as in writing novels, but it is not the basis of Ortega y Gasset's famous work in defense of hunting, which Ortega justifies on deeper philosophical grounds. Flannery O'Connor, no elk hunter herself, believed that only matters of the most crucial importance are fitting subjects for a novel. It is the responsibility of every conscientious writer to identify his proper subject, a thing he will find it impossible to do by getting his values, his priorities, and his life backwards.

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